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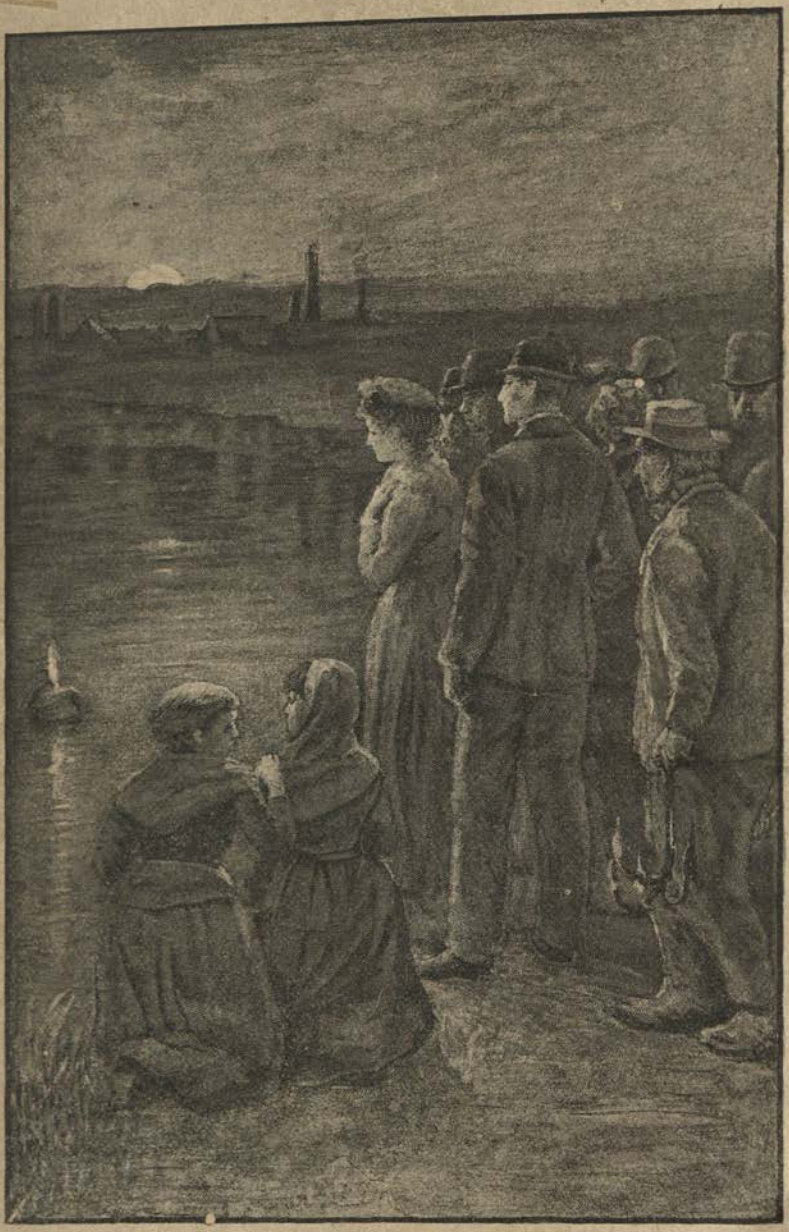

"*With a loaf and a candle.*"—CHAP. X.

THE

PENNYCOMEQUICKS

B1295

A Novel

BY

S. BARING-GOULD

AUTHOR OF

'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' 'JOHN HERRING,' 'THE GAVEROCKS,' ETC.

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NEW EDITION

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THE PENNYCOMEQUICKS. By S. BARING-GOULD.

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THE PENNYCOMEQUICKS.

CHAPTER I.

SHAKING THE TREE.

THERE is an aboriginal race in Borneo, of which it is said that they dispose of their aged parents and relatives in an interesting, novel, and altogether aboriginal fashion.

They courteously, but withal peremptorily, require them periodically to climb trees, and when they are well up and grappling the branches, they shake the trees. If the venerable representatives of the earlier generation hold on, they are pronounced to be still green; but if they drop, they are adjudged ripe, are fallen upon and eaten, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet being reserved as the prerogative of the heir-at-law, as the richest morsels.

We do nothing of this sort in Christendom, least of all in civilized England. God, we thank Thee that we are not as other men are, even as these Borneans, for the conversion of whom we put prayer up at the family altar, that is, the breakfast-table, or offer our mite—a veritable mite, a microscopic fraction of our income. We look in England on our aged relatives with reverence, not with greed, and if we butter them, it is not because we desire to eat them, but because

they are susceptible to butter. We never calculate the number of pounds they weigh, we never look hungrily at their palms, and never put the ladder against the tree, and with hat off and professions of respect and endearment invite them to climb. The Esquimaux act very differently from the Borneans; they take their ancient relations, and put them out of their huts in the cold, and leave them to freeze or starve. What a stride humanity has made with us! We deal with our poor, meagre relatives in this way? We!—as little do we turn them out in the cold as we do fall upon and eat up our plump ones, like the Borneans.

'One of the pleasures of having a rout, is the pleasure of having it over,' said Tom Hood, in his poem of Miss Killmansegg and her Golden Leg, and he said truly—most truly, when that rout was one of obligation or of interest, or of obligation and interest combined, when it was not a spontaneous burst of hospitality, but a laboured affair, and like a laboured literary effort—heavy.

Mrs. Sidebottom, or as she was pleased to accentuate her name, Siddy-bot-TOME, sat before the fire with her silk evening skirt turned up over her knees to prevent it from becoming scorched, and with her neat little feet on the fender.

What tricks we do play with our names to deliver them from the suspicion of vulgarity. How we double the capital F's, and convert the i's into y's, so that common little Finches can strut as Ffinches and insignificant Smiths can add a cubit to their stature as Smythes! How for distinction we canonize our final syllables, and convert Singeons into St. John's, and Slodgers into St. Ledgers; and elevate Mungy into Mont Joye, and Gallicize our Mullens into Molleynes, take the blackness out of Death by spelling it De'Ath and even turn a Devil into De Ville!

The candles had been blown out on the chimney-

piece, in the sconces on the walls, and on the piano. A savour of extinguished candles pervaded the room.

Mrs. Siddy-bot-TOME—her name is given as pronounced once again, that it may stamp itself on the memory of the reader—Mrs. Siddy-bot-TOME (the third time is final)—sat by the fire with puckered lips and brows. She was thinking. She was a lady of fifty, well—very well—preserved, without a gray hair or a wrinkle, with fair skin and light eyes, and hair the colour of hemp. Her eyelashes were lighter still, so light as to be almost white—the white not in fashion at the time, but about to come into fashion, of a creamy tinge.

She was not a clever woman by any means, not a woman of broad sympathies, but a woman who generally had her own way through the force and energy of her character, and as that force was always directed in one direction, and her energy always exerted for one purpose, she accomplished more than did many far cleverer women. She rarely failed to carry her point, whatever that point was.

Whatever that point was, it was invariably one that revolved about herself, as the moon about the earth in the universe, as Papageno about Papagena, in the 'Magic Flute,' and as the cork attached to the cat's tail in the nursery.

If Mrs. Sidebottom had been a really clever woman, she would have concealed her ends and aims, as those who are smuggling lace or silk, coil them about them, and hide them in their umbrellas, under their cloaks, and in their bosoms. But she lacked this cleverness, or failed to admit that selfish aims were contraband. We are all selfish, from the smallest herb, that strives to outrun and smother those herbs that grow about it; through the robin Pecksy, that snaps the worm from its sister Flapsy; and the dog that holds the manger against the ox; to ourselves, the crown of

creation and the climax of self-seeking, but we do not show it. The snail has telescopic eyes, wherewith to peer for something he may appropriate to himself; but the snail, when he thinks himself observed, withdraws his horns and conceals them behind a dimple.

Mrs. Sidebottom was either too eager or too careless, or—for charity hopeth all things—too sincere, to disguise her horns. She thrust them this way, that way; they went up to take bird's-eye views; they dived beneath, to survey matters subterranean; they went round corners, described corkscrews, to observe things from every conceivable aspect. They were thrust down throats and into pockets, and, though small, were of thousandfold magnifying power, like those of a fly, and, like those of a prophet, saw into futurity, and, like those of the historian, explored the past.

In a lounging chair, also near the fire, but not monopolizing the middle like his mother, sat Captain Pennycomequick, the son of Mrs. Sidebottom. He wore a smoking jacket, braided with red or brown; and was engaged languidly on a cigarette-case, looking for a suitable cigarette.

Mrs. Sidebottom's maiden name had been Pennycomequick, and as she despised her married name, even when accentuated past recognition, she had persuaded her son to exchange his designation, by royal licence, to Pennycomequick.

But euphony was not the sole or principal motive in Mrs. Sidebottom that induced her to move her son to make this alteration. She was the daughter of a manufacturer, now some time deceased, in the large Yorkshire village or small town of Mergatroyd in the West Riding, by his second wife. Her half-brother by the first wife now owned the mill, was the head and prop of the family, and was esteemed to be rich.

She was moderately well provided for. She had a sort of lien on the factory, and the late Mr. Sidebottom, solicitor, had left something. But what is

four hundred per annum to a woman with a son in the army dependent on her, and with a soul too big for her purse, with large requirements, an ambition that could only be satisfied on a thousand a year. Would any stomach be content on half-rations that had capacity for whole ones? On the fringe of the Arctic circle a song is sung that 'Iceland is the fairest land that ever the sun beheld,' but it is only sung by those who have never been elsewhere. Now, Mrs. Sidebottom had seen much more luxuriant and snugger conditions of existence than that which can be maintained on four hundred a year. For instance, her friend, Mrs. Tomkins, having six hundred, was able to keep a little carriage; and Miss Jones, on a thousand, had a footman and a butler. Consequently Mrs. Sidebottom was by no means inclined to acquiesce in a boreal and glacial existence of four hundred, and say that it was the best of states that ever the sun beheld.

Mrs. Sidebottom's half-brother, Jeremiah Pennycomequick, was unmarried and aged fifty-five. She knew his age to a day, naturally, being his sister, and she sent him congratulations on his recurrent birthdays—every birthday brought her nearer to his accumulations. She knew his temperament, naturally, being his sister, and could reckon his chances of life as accurately as the clerk in an Assurance Office. To impress the fact of her relationship on Jeremiah, to obtain, if possible, some influence over him, at all events to hedge out others from exercising power over his mind, Mrs. Sidebottom had lately migrated to Mergatroyd, and had brought her son with her. She was the rather moved to do this, as her whole brother, Nicholas Pennycomequick, had just died. There had been no love lost between Jeremiah and Nicholas, and now that Nicholas was no more, it was possible that his son Philip might be received into favour, and acquire gradually such influence over his

uncle as to prejudice him against herself and her son. To prevent this—prevent in both its actual and its original significations — Mrs. Sidebottom had pulled up her tentpegs, and had encamped at Mergatroyd.

The captain wore crimson-silk stockings and glazed pumps. He had neat little feet, like his mother. When he had lighted a cigarette, he blew a whiff of smoke, then held up one of his feet and contemplated it.

'My dear Lambert,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I wish you could slip those red stockings of yours into your uncle's beetle-crushers.'

'They would be too roomy for me,' said the captain.

'Not at all, Lamb. Your feet would expand to fill his shoes,' argued his mother.

'My feet are pinched enough now — certainly,' sighed Lambert Pennycomequick.

'This dinner will not have cost us nothing,' mused Mrs. Sidebottom, looking dreamily into the coals. 'The champagne was six-and-six a bottle, and three bottles were drunk,' she also heaved a sigh.

'Almost a pound. Surely, gooseberry would have done.'

'No, Lamb! it would not. It never does to be stingy in such matters. Though how we are to pay for it all——' Mrs. Sidebottom left the sentence as unsettled as the bill for the champagne was likely to remain.

'I don't see why you should not tell Uncle Jeremiah how crippled we are.'

'Never,' said his mother decisively. 'Man's heart as naturally closes against impecunious relatives as does a tulip against rain. When you are bathing, Lamb, you never voluntarily swim within reach of an octopus. If you see one coming, with its eyes fixed on you, and its feelers extended, you strike out for

dear life. It is so in the great sea of life, which is full *of* these many-armed hungry creatures. The waters are alive with them, great as a needy relation, and small as a begging letter. It is insufficient to know how to swim; one must know also how to kick out and keep away from octopuses. No, Jeremiah must not suppose we want anything of him.'

'It seems to me, mother,' said Lambert, 'that you might just as well tell him we are in difficulties and need his assistance. I am sure he sees it; he was very cold and reserved to-night.'

'Not on any account. You are quite mistaken; he has not a suspicion. Let me see, the waiters were half a guinea each, and the pheasants seven shillings a pair. We could not have sixpenny grapes—it would never have done.'

'I hate reckoning on dead men's shoes,' said Lambert. '*It is* mean. Besides, Uncle Jeremiah may outlive us both.'

'No, Lamb, he cannot. Consider his age; he is fifty-five.'

'And you, mother, are fifty, only five years' difference.'

Mrs. Sidebottom did not wince.

'*You do not consider* that his has been a sedentary life, which is very prejudicial to health. Besides, he has rushes of blood to the head. You saw how he became red as a Tritoma when you made that ill-*judged* remark about Salome. Apoplexy is in the family. Our father died of it.'

'Well, I hate counting the years a fellow has to live. We must all hop some day.'

'I trust he enjoyed himself,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'He took one of the *anges-à-cheval.* Did he touch the ices?'

'I think not.'

'I am sorry—I mean, I am thankful, they are bad for apoplectic persons, Lamb. He pays income-tax on twelve hundred.'

'He does not live at the rate of five hundred.'

'Not at the rate of three.'

'Perhaps eventually he may leave the mill to Philip, and the savings to me. I won't think of it, as it may all turn out different; but that would be best for me.'

'Not best, Lamb. Both the savings and the mill should be yours.'

'What should I do with the mill? You would not have me turn manufacturer?'

'No; but you could sell the business.'

'This is like selling the lion's skin before the lion is killed,' said the captain with a little impatience.

After a pause, during which Mrs. Sidebottom watched a manufactory and a bank and much treasure in the red-hot coals crumble down in the gradual dissolution to ashes, she said:

'Lamb, you have no occasion to be uneasy about your cousin Philip.'

'I am not. I have not given him a thought.'

'Jeremiah can never forgive Nicholas for withdrawing his money from the business at a critical moment, and almost bringing about a catastrophe. When Nicholas did that I was as angry, and used as strong remonstrance as Jeremiah, but all in vain. Nicholas, when he took an idea into his head, would not be diverted from carrying it out, however absurd it was. I did not suppose that Nicholas would be such a fool as he proved, and lose his money. He got into the hands of a plausible scoundrel.'

'Schofield?'

'Yes; that was his name, Schofield, who turned his head, and walked off with pretty nearly every penny. But he might have ruined himself, and I would not have grumbled. What alarmed and angered me was that he jeopardized my fortune as well as that of Jeremiah. A man has a right to ruin himself if he likes, but not to risk the fortunes of others.'

The captain felt that he was not called upon to speak.

'It is as well that we are come here,' pursued Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Though we were comfortable at York, we could not have lived longer there at our rate, and here we can economize. The society here is not worth cultivation; it is all commercial, frightfully commercial. You can see it in the shape of their shoulders and in the cut of their coats. As for the women—— But there, I won't be unkind.'

'Uncle Jeremiah winced at my joke about Salome.'

'Salome!' repeated his mother, and her mouth fell at the corners. 'Salome!' She fidgeted in her chair. 'I had not calculated on her when I came here. Really, I don't know what to do about her. You should not have made that joke. It was putting ideas into your uncle's head. It made the blood rush to his face, and that showed you had touched him. That girl is a nuisance. I wish she were married or shot. She may yet draw a stroke across our reckoning.'

Mrs. Sidebottom lapsed into thought, thought that gave her no pleasure. After a pause of some minutes, Captain Lambert said:

'By the way, mother, what table-cloth did you have on to-day? I noticed Uncle Jeremiah looking at it inquisitively.'

'Naturally he would look at it, and that critically, as he is a linen manufacturer, and weaves fine damasks. I hate shop.'

'But—what table-cloth was it?'

'The best, of course. One figured with oak-leaves and acorns, and in the middle a wreath, just like those thrown over one's head by urchins for a tip, on the Drachenfels.'

'Are you sure, mother?'

'I gave it out this morning.'

'Would you mind looking at it? I do not think

the table has been cleared yet. When I saw Uncle Jeremiah was professionally interested in it, I looked also, but saw no acorns or oak-leaves.'

'Of course there were oak-leaves and acorns; it was our best.'

'Then I must be blind.'

'Fiddlesticks!' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

However, she stood up and went into the dining-room.

A moment later the captain heard an exclamation. Then his mother left the dining-room, and he heard her ascend the stairs. Shortly after she descended, and re-entered the room with a face the colour of a table-cloth, or, to be more exact, of the same tone as her eyelashes.

'Well,' said the Captain languidly, 'have the oak-leaves and acorns disappeared in the wash?'

'Oh, Lamb! what is to be done? Jeremiah will never forgive us. He will feel this acutely—as an insult. That owl—that owl of a maid has ruined our prospects.'

'What has she done?'

'And not one of the waiters, though paid half a guinea each, observed it.'

'What was done?'

'She put a sheet on the table, and made up your bed with the oak-leaves and acorns!'

CHAPTER II.

SALOME.

I LAY in bed this morning, musing on the feelings of those aged Borneans as they approached ripeness, and noticed the eyes of the rising generation fixed on them with expectancy, saw their red tongues flicker out of their mouths and stealthily lick their lips. I lay in

bed considering whether my time had come to crawl *up* the tree, whether, perhaps, I was already hanging to one of the branches, and felt the agitation of the trunk. But the thought was uncomfortable, and I turned back to the Borneans who live very remote from us, and I considered how sensitive they must have become in old age to every glance of eye, and word let slip, and gesture of impatience observable in the rising generation. I mused over the little artifices that would be adopted by them to disguise the approach of ripeness; how, when extending their shaking hands over the fire, they would endeavour to control the muscles and disguise their tremble; how they would give to them an unreal appearance of nervous grip; how they would talk loud and deep out of their quavering pipe; and how they would fill in the creases in their brows and cheeks with tallow, and dance at every festival with an affectation of suppleness long lost. And I considered further how that all these little artifices would be seen through and jeered at, and how they never for one minute would postpone the fatal day when the tree would be indicated, and the command given to ascend.

Then next, having felt my ribs and counted them, and my thews and found them shrunk and with no flesh on them, I thought of the Esquimaux, and the way in which their elders were put out of doors and exposed to die of cold; and after I had left my bed, at breakfast, throughout the day, I remained mighty touchy and keenly observant, and alarmed at every slight, and fault of deference, and disregard of habitual consideration, thinking it might be a premonition that I was being considered fit to be turned out into the cold.

Among barbarians it is customary to surfeit a victim destined to become a sacrifice. It almost seemed as if the birthday-banquet given to Uncle Jeremiah by his half-sister had been given with this

intent. Mythologists tell us that Pluto, the god of the nether world, and Plutus, the god of wealth, were identical divinities, variously designated according to the aspect in which viewed, whether from that of the victims offered to the god, or from that of the immolator. The god of Death to one was the god of Fortune to another.

Uncle Jeremiah Pennycomequick was not indeed shaken by his half-sister and nephew whilst clinging to the Tree of Life, but was apprised by them as to his ripeness, and to his calibre, and was not unaware that such was the case. Indeed, as already intimated, Mrs. Sidebottom was as incapable of concealing her motives as is Mephistopheles of concealing his hoof. She flattered herself that it was not so, and yet she wore her purposes, her ambitions, in her face.

As Jeremiah walked homewards it was with much the same consciousness that must weigh on the spirits of a bullock that has been felt and measured by a butcher.

He opened his door with a latch-key, and entered his little parlour. A light was burning there, and he saw Salome seated on a stool by the fire, engaged in needle-work. The circle of light cast from above was about her, irradiating her red-gold hair. She turned and looked up at Jeremiah with a smile, and showed the cheek that had been nearest the fire glowing like a carnation.

'What—not in bed?' exclaimed the old man, half reproachfully, and yet with a tone of pleasure in his voice.

'No, uncle; I thought you might possibly want something before retiring. Besides, you had not said Good-night to me, and I couldn't sleep without that.'

'I want nothing, child.'

'Shall I fold up my work and go?'

'No—no,' he replied hesitatingly, and stood looking at the fire, then at his chair, and then, with doubt

and almost fear, at her. 'Salome, I should like a *little* talk with you. I am out of sorts, out of spirits. The Sidebottoms always irritate me. Velvet is soft, but the touch chills my blood. I want to have my nerves composed before I can sleep, and the hour is not late—not really late. I came away from the Sidebottoms as soon as I could do so with decency. Of course, it was very kind of my sister to give this dinner in my honour, on my birthday, but——' He did not finish the sentence.

The girl took his hand and pressed him to sit down in his chair. He complied without resistance, but drew away his hand from her with a gesture of uneasiness, a shrinking that somewhat surprised her.

When in his seat, he sat looking at her, with his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, and his palms folded before his breast like the hands of a monumental effigy. Salome had resumed her place and work. As he did not speak, she presently glanced up at him and smiled with her slight sweet smile, that was not the motion of the lips, but the dimpling of the pure cheek. He did not return her smile; his eyes, though on her, did not see her and notice the inquiry in her countenance.

Jeremiah was aged that day fifty-five, or, as Mrs. Sidebottom put it for her greater comfort, in his fifty-sixth year. The dinner party at his half-sister's had been given entirely in his honour. His health had been drunk, and many good wishes for long years had been expressed with apparent heartiness; but what had been done to gratify him had been overdone in some particulars, and underdone in others—overdone in profession, underdone in sincerity; and he returned home dissatisfied and depressed.

When the peacock unfurls his fan, he does not persistently face you; if he did so, words would fail to express your admiration, but the bird twirls about on his feet, and foolishly exposes the ribbing of his

plumage, so as to provoke contemptuous [illegible]
It is the same with selfish and with v[illegible]
They make a prodigious effort to impos[illegible]
still ruffling with expanded glories, they revolve on their pivots, and in complete unconsciousness exhibit the ignoble rear of sordid artifice, and falsity, and mean pretence.

Joseph Cusworth had been at first clerk and then traveller for the house of Pennycomequick, a trustworthy, intelligent and energetic man. Twenty-two years ago, after the factory had fallen under the sole management of Jeremiah, through the advanced age of his father and his half-brother's disinclination for business, master and man had quarrelled. Jeremiah had been suspicious and irascible in those days, and he had misinterpreted the freedom of action pursued by Cusworth as allowed him by old Pennycomequick, and dismissed him. Cusworth went to Lancashire, where he speedily found employ, and married. After a few years and much vexation through the incompetence or unreliability of agents, Jeremiah had swallowed his pride and invited Cusworth to return into his employ, holding out to him the prospect of admission into partnership after a twelvemonth. Cusworth had, accordingly, returned to Mergatroyd and brought with him his wife and twin daughters. The reconciliation was complete. Cusworth proved to be the same upright, reliable man as of old, and with enlarged experience. His accession speedily made itself felt. He was one of those men who attract friends everywhere, whom everyone insensibly feels can be trusted.

The deed of partnership was drawn up and engrossed, and only lacked signature, when, in going through the mill with Jeremiah, Cusworth was caught by the lappet of his coat in the machinery, drawn in, under the eye of his superior, and so frightfully mangled that he never recovered consciousness, and expired a few hours after.

From that time, Mrs. Cusworth, with the children, was taken into the manufacturer's house, where she acted as his housekeeper. There the little girls grew up, and made their way into the affections of the solitary man who encouraged them to call him uncle, though there was absolutely no relationship subsisting between them.

Jeremiah had never been married; he had never been within thought of such an event. No woman had ever made the smallest impression on his heart. He lived for his business, which engrossed all his thoughts; as for his affections, they would have stagnated but for the presence of the children in the house, the interest they aroused, the amusement they caused, the solicitude they occasioned, and for the thousand little fibres their innocent hands threw about his heart, till they had caught and held it in a web of their artless weaving. He had lost his mother when he was born, his father married again soon after, and his life at home with his stepmother had not been congenial. He was kept away from home at school, and then put into business at a distance, and his relations with his half-sister and half-brother had never been cordial. They had been pampered and he neglected. When, finally, he came home to assist his father, his half-sister was married, and his brother, who had taken a distaste for business, was away.

One day of his life had passed much like another; he had become devoted to his work, which he pursued mechanically, conscientiously, but at the same time purposelessly, for he had no one whom he loved or even cared for to whom his fortune might go and for whom, therefore, it would be a pleasure to accumulate. And as for himself, he was without ambition.

When daily he returned from the mill after the admission of the Cusworth family under his roof, the prattle and laughter of the children had refreshed him; their tender, winning ways had overmastered him and

softened his hitherto callous heart. It was to him as if the sun had suddenly broken through the clouds that had overarched and chilled and obscured his life, and was warming, glorifying, and vivifying his latter days.

Time passed, and the little girls grew up into young women. They were much alike in face and in colour of hair and eyes and complexion; but there the likeness stopped. In character they were not twins. Their names were Salome and Janet. Janet was married. A year ago, when she was barely nineteen, the son of a manufacturer at Elbœuf, in Normandy, had seen, loved, and made her his own.

This young man, Albert Victor Baynes, had been born and bred in France, but his father had been a manufacturer in Yorkshire, till driven to distraction by strikes at times when he had taken heavy contracts, he, like a score of others similarly situated, had migrated with his plant and business to Normandy, and opened in a foreign land a spring of wealth that copiously irrigated a wide area, and which greed and folly had banished from its proper home. About Rouen, Elbœuf, and Louviers are bristling factory chimneys and busy manufactures, carried thither by Yorkshire capitalists and employers, and where they initiated, the French have followed, and have drained away our English trade.

Young Baynes had come to Yorkshire and to Mergatroyd to visit relatives, and he had at once lost his heart to Janet Cusworth. As he was the only son of a man in good business, and as 'Uncle' Jeremiah was prepared to act liberally towards the daughter of Joseph Cusworth, no difficulties arose to cross the course of love and delay union. It was said that Jeremiah Pennycomequick could hardly have behaved more liberally had Janet been his daughter. But another reason urged him to generosity beside his regard for the girl. This was gratitude to Albert

Victor Baynes for choosing Janet instead of his special favourite, Salome, who had chiefly wound herself about his heart. Janet was a lively, frolicsome little creature, whom it was a relaxation to watch, and whose tricks provoked laughter; but Salome was that one of the twins who had depth of character, and who, as the millfolk declared, had inherited all her father's trustworthiness, thoughtfulness, and that magnetism which attracts love.

Salome continued her needlework silently, with the firelight flickering over her fair face and rich hair. Her complexion was very delicate, and perhaps the principal charm of her face consisted in the transparency not of the skin only, but of the entire face, that showed every change of thought and feeling by a corresponding dance of blood and shift of colour in it—and not colour only, for as a mirror takes the lightest breath and becomes clouded by it, so was it with her countenance; bright with an inner light, the slightest breath of trouble, discouragement, alarm, brought a cloud over it, dimming its usual brilliancy.

'Yours is a very tell-tale face,' her sister had often said to her. 'Without your opening your eyes I can read all that passes in your mind.'

At the time that young Baynes had stayed at Mergatroyd, Jeremiah had been uneasy. The young man hovered round the sisters, and spoke to one as much as to the other, and divided his attentions equally between them. The sisters so closely resembled each other in features, complexion and hair, as well as in height and frame, that only such as knew them could distinguish the one from the other, and the distinction consisted rather in expression than in aught else. How anyone could mistake the one for the other was a marvel to Jeremiah, who was never in doubt. But the resemblance was so close that Albert Victor Baynes hung for some time in uncertainty as to which he should take, and was only decided by the inner

qualities of Janet, whose vivacity and sparkle best suited the taste of a man whose ideas of woman showed they had been formed in France.

Whilst Baynes was in uncertainty, or in apparent uncertainty, Jeremiah suffered. He loved both the girls, but he loved Salome infinitely better than her sister; it would be to him a wrench to part with brilliant Janet, but nothing like the wrench that would ensue were he required to separate from Salome.

Those who from childhood have been surrounded by an atmosphere of love, who have come to regard it as their natural element, such have no conception of the force with which love boils up in an old heart that has been long arid and affectionless. In the limestone Western Hills there are riverless valleys, tracts of moor and mountain without a rift, dead and waterless, yet deep beneath, in secret channels, streams are flowing, and mighty vaults form subterranean reservoirs, by all who pass over the surface unsuspected. But suddenly from a cliff-side pours the long-hidden water, not a spring, a rivulet, but a full-grown river ready to turn millwheels and carry boats. So is it with certain human natures that have been long passionless, without the token of soft affections: the all-conquering stream of love breaks from their hearts in mighty volume and unexpectedly.

There had been nothing of self-analysis in Jeremiah. The children had sprung up under his care, and year by year had seen them acquire an inch or a fraction of an inch in height, their beauty develop, their intelligences expand; imperceptibly they had stolen from infancy into childhood, and from childhood in like manner had crept unobserved into maidenhood, and then flowered into full and perfect beauty; and each stage of growth had carried them a stage further into Jeremiah's affections, and had cast another and a stronger tie about his heart. He had loved them as children, and he loved them as beautiful and intelligent

girls, as belonging to his house, as essential to his happiness, as the living elements that made up to him the idea of home. The only sorrow he had—if that could be called a sorrow which was no more than a regret—was that they were not his own true nieces, or, better still, his children. When Janet was taken and Salome left, he was thankful, and he put away from him for the time the fear that Salome would also take wing and leave him in the same manner as Janet had gone. How could he endure recurrence to the old gloom, and relapse into purposeless gathering of money? How could he endure life deprived of both Janet and Salome? How can a man who has seen the sun endure blindness? Or a man whose ears have drunk in music bear deafness? Deafness and blindness of heart would be his portion in that part of life when most he needed ear and eye—deafness and blindness after having come to understand the melody of a happy home, and see the beauty of a child-encircled hearth.

What must be the distress of him who has had a well-furnished house to have an execution put in, and everything sold away from before his eyes, nothing left him but the bed on which to lie and gnash his teeth? How bald, how cold, how hateful the dismantled home will seem without the thousand comforts and beautifying objects to which his eyes have been accustomed! The children as they grew up had furnished Jeremiah's house with pleasant fancies, had hung the walls with bright remembrances, and filled every corner with tender associations. The floor was strewn with their primrose homage. The thought that as he had lost Janet, so must he some day lose Salome, rose up continually before Jeremiah, and sickened him with fear. He tried to steel himself in expectation of it. It was in the nature of things that young girls should marry. It was inevitable that a closer and stronger tie should be formed, and then

that cord of reverential gratitude which now attached Salome to him would dwindle imperceptibly, yet surely, to a thread, and from a thread to a filament. In proportion as from the new bond other ties arose, so would that attaching her to him become attenuated till it became formal only.

A great pain arose in Jeremiah's heart.

And now, this evening, he looked at the girl engaged on her needlework, and observation returned into his eyes. Now he began that work of self-analysis, with her before him, that he had never thought of engaging in before, never dreamed would be requisite for him to engage in.

As he looked steadily at Salome, his closed palms trembled, and he separated them, put one to his lips, for they were trembling also, and then to his brow, which was wet.

Salome's soft brown eyes were lifted from her work, and rested steadily on him.

'Dear uncle,' she said. 'My dear—dear, uncle! You are unwell.'

She drew her stool close to him, and threw her arms about him, to draw his quivering face towards her own that she might kiss it. But he started up with a groan, backed from her arms, and paced the room in agitation. He dare not receive her embrace. He dare not meet her eyes. He had read his own heart for the first time, helped thereto by a casual joke from Captain Lambert Pennycomequick at table that evening.

CHAPTER III.

A TRUST.

DURING dinner that evening the conversation had turned on modern music. Yorkshire folk are, with rare exceptions, musical, and those who are not

musical are expected, at all events, to be able to take their part in a conversation about music. Someone had spoken about old English ballads, whereupon Captain Lambert had said, as an aside to his uncle:

'No one can doubt what is your favourite song.'

'There you have the advantage of me,' said Jeremiah simply.

'"Sally in our Alley"—but I must say you take slow time in getting to the last verse.'

Then he hummed the words:

'And when my seven long years are out,
Oh, then I'll marry Sally!
And then how happily we'll live,
But not in our Alley.'

Then it was that the blood had rushed into the manufacturer's temples, a rush of blood occasioned partly by anger at being made the subject of a joke, and partly by the suggestion which startled him.

Never before that moment had the thought occurred to him that it was possible for him to bind Salome to him by the closest and surest of ties. No, never before had he imagined that this was possible.

How one word starts a train of ideas! As a spark falling on thatch may cause a conflagration, so may a word carelessly dropped set blood on fire and drive a man to madness. That little remark had produced in Jeremiah an effect greater than Lambert could have calculated, and his mother went very near the truth when she rebuked him for saying what he had. From thenceforth Jeremiah could no longer look at Salome in the old light; she was no more a child to him, and he no more an old man beyond the reach of that flame that sweeps round the world and scorches all men. In Wagner's great opera of the 'Valkyrie,' Brunnhild is represented asleep, engirdled by a ring of fire, and Sigurd, who tries to reach her, can only do so by passing through the flame, and to render it innocuous he sings the wondrous fire-spell song, and

the flame leaps and declines, and finally goes out to the cadences of the spell. But Jeremiah now found himself caught in the *Waberlohe* that enringed Salome, knowing no incantation by which to abate its ardour; whilst she sat unconscious of the peril to which she subjected others, of the magic that surrounded and streamed forth from her, guileless of the pain which she occasioned him whom she beckoned to her. Jeremiah was caught by the flame, it curled round him, and he writhed in its embrace. He was an old, at all events an elderly, man, his age five and fifty, and Salome was but twenty. He had passed the grand climateric when she was born. Could he, dare he, love her, except with the simple love of a parent for a child? But could he love her thus any longer now that his eyes were opened, and he had discovered the condition of his own heart? When Adam had tasted of the Tree of Knowledge his child-like simplicity was gone, and he made himself coverings to hide himself from himself and from others. So now, this man in the decline of life had tasted also, and at once was filled with shame at himself, and he sought out evasion of the truth, a disguise for his feelings, lest Salome should suspect what was passing within him.

'Salome, my child,' he said, 'those Sidebottoms vex me beyond endurance. What do you think! They served up a really sumptuous dinner on a table covered with a sheet.'

'A sheet—from a bed!'

'A sheet, not a tablecloth. It was characteristic.'

'Has that upset you?'

'No—not that. But, Salome, I have been considering how it would be, were this factory, after I am no more, to fall into such hands as those of the ninny captain.'

'There is Mr. Philip,' said the girl.

'Philip——!' the manufacturer paused. 'Philip—

I hardly consider him as one of the family. His father behaved outrageously.'

'But for all that he is your nephew.'

'Of course he is, by name and blood, but—I do not like him.'

'You do not know him, uncle.'

'That is true; but——'

'But he is your nearest relative.'

Mr. Pennycomequick was silent. He returned to his chair and reseated himself; not now leaning back, with his arms folded on his breast, but bent forward, with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

He looked into the fire. After full five minutes' silence he said, in a tone of self-justification:

'I can never forgive my half-brother Nicholas.'

'Yet he is dead,' said the girl.

There was no accent of reproach in her voice; nevertheless Jeremiah took her words as conveying a reproach.

'I do not mean,' he said apologetically, 'that I allowed him to die unforgiven, but that his conduct was inexcusable. I have pardoned the man, but I cannot forgive his act.'

'Philip, however,' said Salome, 'is the son of the man, and not of his mistake.'

Jeremiah was touched, and winced; but he would not show it.

'My brother Nicholas acted in such a manner as to produce an estrangement that has, and will have, lastingly influenced our relations. Philip I saw at his father's funeral, which I attended—which,' he repeated the sentence, 'which I attended.'

The girl said no more. She knew that Jeremiah was not a man to brook interference, and she was well aware that this was a matter in which she had no right to interfere. But he was not satisfied with so slight a word of self-justification; he returned to

the topic, with his face turned from her, looking into the fire.

'It was thoughtless; it was wicked. The mill was left between us, burdened with a certain charge for my half-sister; and Nicholas never took the smallest interest in the business. I did the work; he drew his share. He got into the hands of a swindling speculator, who fired his imagination with a scheme for converting the Desert of Sahara into a vast inland sea, the company to have the monopoly of the trade round its shores. My brother's head was turned, and he insisted on withdrawing his share from the mill. He would sell his share—draw all his money out of the concern, and pitch it wherever Schofield——I mean wherever it was most likely to be engulfed and yield no return. I remonstrated. I pointed out to my brother the folly of the scheme, the danger to me. I had no wish to have some man, of whom I knew nothing, thrust into partnership with me. I must buy my brother out myself. I did this at a moment when money was dear, and also at a time when it was necessary to provide the mill with new machinery, or be left in the lurch in the manufacture of figured damasks. I had to borrow the money. Slackness set in, and—God knows!—I was as nearly brought to bankruptcy as a man can be without actually stopping. Your father came to my aid. But I had several years of terrible struggle, during which bitter resentment against my brother Nicholas grew in my heart. We never met again. We no longer corresponded. As for his son, I knew nothing of him. I had seen him as a boy. I did not see him again till he was a man, at his father's grave. If Nicholas had considered my prejudices, as I suppose he would call them, he would not have put Philip in a solicitor's office, knowing, as he must have known, my mistrust of lawyers. I will not say that I would not have given him a place with me, had Nicholas asked for it; but

he was either too proud to stoop to request a favour of me, or his old prejudice against trade survived his ruin.'

'Philip may be good and sensible, and a nephew to be proud of. How can you tell, uncle, that he is not, when you do not know him?'

'He has chosen his profession now. He is a lawyer, and so his line of life leads away from mine.'

Then ensued silence, broken at length by Salome.

'Uncle,' she said, 'I have had a letter from dear Janet, and what do you think? She is coming to England, and most likely to us. She does not say when; but those dreadful Prussians are making their way to Rouen, in spite of the wonderful stand made by General Faidherbe and the heroic conduct of his troops. Janet says that she wonders how any soldiers can stand against an army commanded by a mandevil, for that is what the Prussian general is named. She says that Albert Victor has felt it his duty to volunteer to fight for the country of his nativity and adoption, so dear Janet is alone, and Albert has advised her to take refuge in England till the tyranny be over. But Janet says she is in hourly expectation that the Prussians will be out-manœuvred, surrounded, and cut to pieces, and, much as she hates the enemies, her chief anxiety is that the French may not forget to act with humanity in the moment of victory. She says that the affair at Amiens was quite misrepresented by the English papers, that Faidherbe obtained a splendid victory, and only retired in pursuance of a masterly plan he had conceived of drawing the Prussians on, so as to envelop them and crush them at one blow. Moreover, Janet says that this blow is expected to fall at any moment, and to show how thorough a partisan she is—even to me she has begun to spell her name in the French way, Jeannette.'

'Janet likely to come to us!' exclaimed Jeremiah.

'Only in the event, which she says is more than

problematical, of the enemy occupying Rouen. She tells me that the spirit of the French is superb. The way in which every man has flown to arms at the call of his country is unparalleled. She says that the Emperor was the cause of the disasters that have occurred hitherto, but that France has found a man of almost superhuman genius, called Gambetta, who is already causing consternation amongst the Prussians. She says that she has seen it stated in the most trustworthy Paris papers that in Germany mothers still their children with the threat that if they cry, they will invoke Gambetta.'

'Janet will certainly be here shortly,' said Jeremiah. 'The war can only go one way'

'I shall be delighted to see my darling sister, and yet sorry for the occasion of her visit. She tells me that the factories are all stopped. The hands are now engaged in the defence of their country. Oh, uncle! what would happen to Janet if anything befell Albert Victor? Do you think he was right to leave his wife and take up arms as a franc-tireur? He is not really a Frenchman, though born at *Elbœuf*.'

To her surprise, Salome saw that her old friend was not attending to what she was saying. He was not thinking of her sister any more. He was thinking about her. When she asked what would happen to Janet were her husband to be carried off, the question forced itself upon his thought, What would become of Salome were he to fall sick, and be unable to defend himself against his half-sister. He was perfectly conscious of Mrs. Sidebottom's object in coming to Mergatroyd, and he was quite sure that in the event of paralysis, or any grievous sickness taking him, his half-sister would invade his house and assume authority therein. He saw that this would happen inevitably; and he was not at all certain how she would behave to Salome. Mrs. Cusworth was a feeble woman, unable to dispute the ground with one so pertinacious,

and armed with so good a right, as Mrs. Sidebottom. What friends had Salome? She had none but himself. Her sister's house was about to be entered by the enemy, her sister to be a refugee in England. The factories at Elbœuf were stopped; it was uncertain how the war, when it rolled away, would leave the manufacturers, whether trade that had been stopped on the Seine would return thither. What if the Baynes family failed?

Would it not be advisable to secure to Salome a home and position by making her his wife? Then, whatever happened to him, she would be safe, in an impregnable situation.

'Salome!'

'Yes, uncle.'

She looked up anxiously. She had not let him see that she was aware that he was in trouble of mind, and yet she knew it, though she did not guess its character. Hers was one of those sympathetic natures that feels a disturbance of equilibrium, as the needle in a magnetometer vibrates and reels when to the gross human eye there is naught to occasion it. She had watched Jeremiah's face whilst she spoke to him of her sister, and was surprised and pained to notice how little Janet's calamities and anxieties affected him.

What was the matter with him? What were the thoughts that preoccupied his mind? Not a shadow of a suspicion of their real nature entered her innocent soul.

'Dear uncle,' she said, when she had waited for a remark, after he had called her attention, and had waited in vain, 'what is it?'

'Nothing.'

He had recoiled in time. On the very verge of speaking he had arrested himself.

'Uncle,' she said, 'I am sure you are not well, either in body or in mind.'

He stood up, went out of the room, without a word.

Salome looked after him in surprise and alarm. Was he going off his head? She heard him ascend the stairs to his study, and he returned from it almost immediately. He re-entered the room with a long blue sealed envelope in his hand.

'Look at this, my child, and pay great attention to me. An unaccountable depression is weighing on me—no, not altogether unaccountable, for I can trace it back to the society in which I have been. It has left me with a mistrust of the honesty and sincerity of everyone in the world, of everyone, that is, but you; you'—he touched her copper-gold head lightly with a shaking hand—'you I cannot mistrust; you—it would kill me to mistrust. I hold to life, to my respect for humanity, through you as a golden chain. Salome, I have a great trust to confide to you, and I do it because I know no one else in whom I can place reliance. This is my will, and I desire you to take charge of it. I commit it to your custody. Put it where it may be safe, and where you may know where to lay hand on it when it shall be wanted.'

'But, uncle, why not leave it with your lawyer.'

'I have no lawyer,' he answered sharply. 'I have never gone to law, and thrown good money after bad. You know my dislike for lawyers. I wrote my will with my own hand after your sister married, and I flatter myself that no wit of man or rascality of lawyers can pervert it. I can set down in plain English what my intentions are as to the disposal of my property, so that anyone can understand my purpose, and no one can upset its disposition.'

'But, uncle—why should I have it who am so careless?'

'You are not careless. I trust you. I have perfect confidence that what is committed to you you will keep, whether the will concerns you or not. I wish you to have it, and you will obey my wishes.'

He put the paper into her reluctant hands, and waited for her to say something. Her cheeks were flushed with mingled concern for him and fear for herself. Such a valuable deed she thought ought to have been kept in his strong iron safe, and not confided to her trembling hands.

He put his hand on her shoulder.

'Thank you, Salome,' he said. 'You have relieved my mind of a great anxiety.'

'And now, uncle, you will go to bed?'

He stood, with his hand still on her shoulder, hesitatingly. 'I don't know; I am not sleepy.' He thought further. 'Yes, I will go. Good-night, my child.'

Then he left the room, ascended the stairs, passed through his study into his bedchamber beyond, where he turned down the clothes, and threw off his dress coat and waistcoat, and then cast himself on the bed.

His brain was in a whirl. He could not retire to rest in that condition of excitement. He would toss on his bed, which would be one of nettles to him. He left it, stood up, drew on a knitted cardigan jersey, and then put his arms through his great-coat.

About a quarter of an hour after he had mounted to his room he descended the stairs again, and then he encountered Salome once more, leaving the little parlour with the envelope that contained his will in her hand.

'What! You not gone to bed, Salome?'

'No, uncle, I have been dreaming over the fire. But, surely, you are not going out?'

'Yes, I am. There has been such a downpour of rain all day that I have not taken my customary constitutional. I cannot sleep. The night is fine, and I shall go for a stroll on the canal bank.'

'But, uncle, it is past twelve o'clock.'

'High time for you to be in bed. For me, it is another matter. My brain is on fire; I must take a composing draught of fresh night air.'

'But, uncle——'

'Do not remain up longer. I have acted inconsiderately in keeping you from your bed so long. Go to sleep speedily, and do not trouble yourself about me. I have my latch-key, and will let myself in. The gas shall remain turned down in the hall. I am always upset unless I have a walk during the day, and the sheets of rain that poured down have kept me a prisoner. I shall not be out for long. I will cool my head and circulate my blood, under the starry sky.'

'But you will find the roads sloppy, after the rain.'

'The towpath will be dry. I am going there, by the canal. Good-night.'

She held up her innocent, sweet face for the kiss he had neglected to give her a quarter of an hour ago, when he left the room. He half stooped, then turned away without kissing her.

'Good-night, dear Salome. Mind the will. It is a trust.'

Then he went out.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TOWPATH.

THERE are points, occasions on life's journey, when our guides fail us, and these points and occasions are neither few nor far between. The signposts that might instruct us are either illegible or have not been set up. The forming of a determination is of vital importance, but the material on which to form a determination is withdrawn from us, as the straw was taken from the Israelites when they were ordered to make bricks.

We buy a map and start on our journey, and come to branch-roads which are not set down. The map is antiquated, and no longer serviceable.

We buy a legal compendium which is to obviate having recourse to lawyers, and when we encounter a difficulty, turn to it for enlightenment, and find that precisely this question is passed over.

We purchase a manual of domestic medicine to cut off the necessity of calling in a doctor at every hitch, and when a hitch occurs we discover that precisely this one is unnoted in our book.

We are provided with moral *vade-mecums* which are to serve us in all contingencies, but are arrested at every hundred paces by some knot which the instructions in our *vade-mecum* do not assist us in untying.

Jeremiah now found himself in a predicament from which he did not know how to escape, at a fork in life's road, and he was unable to form a judgment whether to turn to the left hand or to the right.

By his own generosity he had rendered his position discouraging. He had behaved to Janet with so great liberality when she married, as to produce a deep and general impression that Salome would be treated with at least equal liberality in the event of her marriage. An admirer might hesitate to offer for a portionless girl, however charming in feature and perfect in mind, not because necessarily mercenary in his ideas, but because he would know that as single life is impossible without means of supporting it, so double life, containing in itself the promise of development into a number of supplemental lives, is proportionately impossible.

Jeremiah, might, accordingly, with almost certainty, reckon on being left to a solitary and barren decline of life, after he had come late to appreciate the warmth and amenities of domestic association—after he had enjoyed them a sufficient number of years to esteem them indispensable.

He recalled the dead and meagre existence he had led before he received the little girls and their mother into his house, and he sickened at the prospect of

recurring to it. He could not disguise from himself that if he lost Salome, everything that gave zest and interest to life would be taken away from him. He would be forced to revert to the hard uniformity of his previous existence; but that thought was repugnant to him. Most men look back on their childhood or to college days as a period of exuberant vitality and unspoiled delight. To but few is it not given to begin their Book of Genesis with Paradise, flowing with sparkling rivers whose beds are gold, rich with flowers, redolent with odours. Sooner or later all are cast out through the gates, and there is no return—only a reminiscence. To some more than to others the smell of the flowers clings through life. The youth and early manhood of Jeremiah had been joyless, spent among briars and thorns, and only late had he found the gates of Eden, and the cherub with a smile had withdrawn his sword, and allowed him a look in. What would be the end of life to him if Salome were taken away? As his health and powers of resistance failed, his house would be invaded by the Sidebottoms, perhaps also by the unknown Philip, and they would wrangle over his savings, and hold him a prisoner within his own walls. But—dare he suggest to Salome that she should be his wife? He did not shut his eyes to their disparity in age, to the fact that her regard for him was of a totally different texture from such as a man exacts of a wife. Would it be possible to change filial into marital love? Was it not as preposterous of him to expect it as was the infatuation of the alchemist to transmute one metal into another?

Then, again, would not his proposal shake, if it did not shatter, her respect, forfeit that precious love she now tendered him with both hands without stint? By asking for what she could not give, would he not lose that which he had already, like the dog that dropped the meat snapping at a shadow, and so leave him in utter destitution? The harbour of the thought

of a change of relations had affected the quality of his intercourse with her, had clouded its serenity, disturbed its simplicity. It had prevented him from meeting her frank eye, from receiving her embrace, admitting the touch of her lips. He shrank from her innocent endearments as though he had no right to receive them, tendered in one coinage and received in another value. Were he to communicate to her the thought that fermented within him, would not the yeasty microbe alter her and change her sweet affection for him into something that might be repugnance?

He drew a laboured breath.

'I am in a sore strait,' he groaned; 'I know not what to do. Would to heaven that my course were determined for me.'

He had reached the towpath beside the canal.

'Good-night, sir.'

He was startled. The night watch had met him, the man employed to walk around and through the factories at all hours of the night, on the look-out against fire, on guard against burglars.

'Good-night, sir. Just been on the bank to look at the river. Very full, and swelling instead of going down. Lot of rain fallen of late. Cold for the gold-fish yonder.'

'Good-night,' answered the manufacturer; 'I also want to see the river. There is more rain yonder.'

He pointed to the western sky.

'The river is rising rapidly,' said the man; 'but there's no harm can take Pennyquick's—ligs too high.' Jeremiah's factory went by his surname, but contracted by the people through the omission of a syllable.

Then the man passed on his way, rattling his keys. The gold-fish! What did he mean?

Outside the wall of Mr. Pennycomequick's factory was a pool, into which the waste steam and boiling water from the engine discharged, and this pool was

always hot. It swarmed with gold fish. At some time or other, no one knew when, or by whom, a few, perhaps only a pair, had been thrown in, and now the little patch of water was thronged with fish. They throve, they multiplied therein. The mill girls cast crumbs to them from their breakfasts and dinners, and were allowed to net some occasionally for their private keeping in glass globes, but not to make of them an article of traffic. There was not a cottage in Pennyquick's Fold that had not such a vessel in the window.

Jeremiah saw that the overflow from the river had reached this little pool and converted it into a lake, chilling the steamy waters at the same time. Mergatroyd town or village stood on the slope of the hill that formed the northern boundary of Keld-dale. The Keld rose in that range of limestone mountains that divides Lancashire from Yorkshire, and runs from Derbyshire to the Scottish border. After a tortuous course between high and broken hills, folding in on each other like the teeth of a rat-trap, leaving in places scarce room in the bottom for road, rail, and canal to run side by side, it burst forth into a broad basin, banked on north and south by low hills of yellow sandstone, overlying coal. Some way down this shallow trough, on the northern flank, built about the hill-slope, and grouped about a church with an Italian spire perched on pillars, stood Mergatroyd. There the valley spread to the width of a mile, and formed a great bed of gravelly deposit of unreckoned depth. A couple of spade-grafts below the surface, water was reached; yet on this gravel stood most of the factories and their tall chimneys. The nature of the soil forbade sinking for foundations. Accordingly these were laid on the surface, the walls, and even the chimneys, being reared on slabs of sandstone laid on the ground. It might seem incredible that such fragile stone-slates should support such superincumbent masses; nevertheless it was so. The pressure, how-

ever, did not always fall on gravel equally compact; this resulted in subsidences. Few walls had not cracked at some time, most were banded with iron, and not a chimney stood exactly perpendicular.

The canal and the river ran side by side, with a towpath along the former; but the high-road had deserted the valley and ran on the top of the hill. Neither canal nor river were of crystalline purity, or of ordinary cleanness; for into them the mills and dye-works discharged their odorous and discoloured refuse water, dense with oil and pigment, with impurities of every description and degree of nastiness. Fish had long ago deserted these waters, and if an occasional eel was caught it was inedible, so strongly did it taste of oil and dye.

The Yorkshire towns and rivers have their special 'bouquet,' which does not receive favourable appreciation by a stranger; it is not a fluctuating savour like that pervading the neighbourhood of Crosse and Blackwell's, in Oxford Street, which is at one time redolent of raspberries and another pungent with mixed pickles; summer and winter, spring and fall alike, the same dyes, the same oil, and the same horrible detergents, are employed, and constitute a permanent, all-pervading effluvium, that clings to the garment, the hair, the breath of the inhabitants, as the savour of petroleum belongs to Baku, and the spice of orange flowers and roses is appropriate to the Riviera.

Far away in the north-west, above the boundary hill, the sky throbbed with light, from the iron furnaces seven miles distant, where the coal and iron were dug out of the same beds, and the one served to fuse the other, as in the human breast various qualities are found which tend to temper, purify and turn to service the one the other. The flames that leaped up from the furnaces as thirsty rolling tongues were not visible from the Keld-dale bottom under Mergatroyd, but the reflection was spread over a wide tract of

cloud, and shone with rhythmetic flash, as an auroral display. High up the river, at right angles to the axis of the valley, stood a huge, gaunt, five-storied mill for cloth and serge, commonly known as 'Mitchell's.' Every window in Mitchell's mill was alight this night, for it was running incessantly. Trade in cloth and serge was brisk on account of the Franco-German War. What is a man's loss is another man's gain? The rattle of guns in France produced the rattle of the looms in Yorkshire; and every bullet put through a Frenchman's or a German's uniform put a sovereign into the pocket of a cloth-weaver in England. Such is the law of equilibrium in Nature.

Business was brisk among the cloth-workers, but slack among the linen-weavers; the dead on the battle-field were not buried in windingsheets, least of all in figured damasks.

An unusual downpour of rain had taken place, lasting continuously forty-eight hours. The very windows of heaven seemed to have been opened; at sunset the sky had partially cleared, but there were still lumbering masses of cloud drifting over the face of heaven, as icebergs detached from the mighty wall of black vapour that still remained in the west, built up half-way to the zenith over the great dorsal range, a range that arrested the exhalations from the Atlantic and condensed them into a thousand streams that leaped in 'fosses,' and wriggled and dived among the hills, and cleft themselves roads, to the east or to the west, to reach the sea.

To-night the Keld was very full, so swollen as to have overflowed, or rather to have dived under the embankments, and to ooze up through the soil in all directions in countless irrepressible springs, transforming the paddocks into ponds, and the fields into lagoons.

The tow-path was the only walk that was not a mass of mud or a sop of water. It ran well above the

level of the fields, and the rain that had fallen on it had drained—or, as the local expression had it, 'siped' away.

Along this tow-path Jeremiah walked with his hands behind his back, brooding over his difficulties, seeking a solution that escaped him. If he remained silent, he must be content in a year or two to surrender Salome to another. If he spoke, he might lose her immediately and completely; for were she to refuse him she must at once withdraw from under his roof and remain estranged from him permanently.

But—what if she were to accept him? He who was nearly thrice her age? And what if, in the event of her accepting him, her heart were to wake up and love another? Had he any right to subject her to such a risk, to impose on her such a trial? Would there not be a sacrifice of his own self-respect were he to offer himself to her? Would the love he would demand of her, given hesitatingly, as a duty, forced and uncertain, make up to him for the frank, ready, spontaneous gush of love which surrounded him at present?

'I am in a strait,' said Jeremiah Pennycomequick, again. 'Would to Heaven that the decision were taken out of my hands, and determined for me.'

He had reached the locks. They were fast shut, and the man in charge was away, in his cottage across the field; there was no light shining from the window. He was asleep. No barges passed up and down at night. His duties ended with the daylight. The field he would have to cross next morning to the lock was now submerged. Mr. Pennycomequick halted at the locks, and stood looking down into the lower level, listening to the rush of the water that was allowed to flow through the hatch. He could just see, below in the black gulf, a phosphorescent, or apparently phosphorescent, halo; it was the foam caused by the fall of the water-jet, reflecting the starlight overhead.

As Jeremiah thus stood, irresolute, looking at the lambent dance of the foam, a phenomenon occurred which roused his attention and woke his surprise.

The water in the canal, usually glassy and waveless, suddenly rose, as the bosom rises at a long inhalation, and rolled like a tidal wave over the top of the gates, and fell into the gulf below with a startling crash, as though what had fallen were lead, not water.

What was the cause of this? Jeremiah had heard that on the occasion of an earthquake such a wave was formed in the sea, and rushed up the shore, without premonition.

But he had felt no shock, and—really—a petty canal could hardly be supposed to act in such events like the ocean.

Jeremiah turned to retrace his steps along the path; and he had not gone far before he saw something else that equally surprised him.

In the valley, about two miles above, was, as already said, Mitchell's Mill, lying athwart it, like a huge stranded Noah's Ark. It had five stories, and in each story were twenty windows on the long sides; that made just one hundred windows towards the east, towards Jeremiah; one hundred yellow points of light, against the sombre background of cloud that enveloped the west.

The night was not absolutely dark; there was some light in the sky above the clouds from stars, and a crescent moon, which latter was hidden, but it was not sufficient to have revealed Mitchell's without the illumination from within. Here and there a silvery vaporous light fell through the interstices of the clouds, sufficient to give perspective to the night scene, insufficient to disclose anything. Now Mitchell's was distinguishable as five superimposed rows of twenty stars of equal size and lustre.

All at once, suddenly as if a black curtain had fallen over the scene, all these stars were eclipsed—

not one by one, not in rows, by turns, but altogether, instantaneously and completely, snuffed out at one snip, and with the extinction Mitchell's fell back into the common obscurity, and was no more seen than if it had been blotted out of existence.

'Stopped!' exclaimed Mr. Pennycomequick involuntarily. 'That is queer. I thought they were at full-pressure, running night and day.'

What followed increased his perplexity.

He heard the steam whistle of Mitchell's shrill forth in palpitating, piercing call, not briefly, as if to give notice that work was over, not peremptorily, as signalling for a new batch of hands to replace such as were released; not insistingly, as calling out of sleep, but with a prolonged and growing intensity, with full force of steam, rising in volumes to the highest pitch, as though Mitchell's great bulk were uttering a shriek of infinite panic and acute pain.

And then, from the hillside, where stood another mill, called Poppleton's, howled a 'syren'—another contrivance invented by a perverse ingenuity to create the greatest possible noise of the worst possible quality.

'Surely there must be a fire,' said Jeremiah; 'only bless me! I see no flames anywhere.'

Then he heard a tramp, the tramp of a galloping horse, on the towpath, and he stood aside so as not to be ridden over. A parting in the clouds let down a soft gray light that made the surfaces of water into sheets of steel, and converted the canal into a polished silver skewer. Along, down the towpath, came the horse. Jeremiah could just distinguish a black travelling spot. He waited, and presently saw that a man was riding and controlling the horse, and this man drew rein somewhat as he saw Jeremiah, and halloped, 'Get back! get back! Holroyd reservoir has burst.'

Then along the tow-path he continued at accelerated

speed, and disappeared in the darkness in the direction of the locks.

The alarm bell on the roof 'Pennyquicks' began to jangle. The news had reached the night-watch, and he was rousing the operatives who lived in the mill-fold. Then the 'buzzer' of the yarn-spinning factory brayed, and the shoddy mill uttered a husky hoot. Lights started up, and voices were audible, shouting, crying.

What was to be done?

Jeremiah Pennycomequick considered for a moment. He knew what the bursting of the reservoir implied. He knew that he had not time to retrace the path he had taken to its junction with the road. He was at that point where the valley expanded to its fullest width, and where the greatest space intervened between him and the hillside. Here the level fields were all under water, and before he could cross them, wading, maybe to his knee, the descending wave would be upon him. He looked towards the locksman's cottage; that offered no security, even if he could reach it in time, for it lay low and would be immediately submerged. He turned, and ran down the path towards the locks, and as he ran he heard behind him—not the roar, for roar there was none, but the rumble of the descending flood, like the rumble and mutter of that vast crowd that swept along the road from Paris to Versailles on the memorable fifth of October. Then a wet blast sprang up suddenly and rushed down the valley, swaying the trees, and so chill that when it touched Jeremiah as he ran, it seemed to penetrate to his bones and curdle his blood. It was a blast that travelled with the advancing volume of water, a little forestalling it, as the lightning forestalls the thunder.

Mr. Pennycomequick saw before him the shelter-hut of the locksman on the embankment, a shelter-hut that had been erected as a protection against rain

and wind and frost. It was of brick, and the only chance of escape that offered lay in a scramble to the roof.

How mysterious is it with our wishes and our prayers! We labour for many a year with taut nerve, and ambition keenly, unswervingly set on some object. We hope for it, we entreat for it, and it is as though the heavens were brass, and our prayers could not pierce them, or as if it were indifferent to our desires; it is as though a perverse fate smote all our efforts with paralysis, and took pleasure in thwarting every wish, and frustrating every attempt to obtain what we long for. At another time, hardly knowing what we say, not calculating how what we ask may be accomplished, not lifting a little finger to advance its fulfilment, we form a wish, vague and inarticulate, and instantly, completely, in the way least expected, and with a fulness hardly desired, the prayer is answered, the wish is accomplished.

'Would to Heaven,' Jeremiah Pennycomequick had said twice that night on the towpath, hardly meaning what he said, saying it because he was in perplexity, not because he desired extraneous help out of it, 'Would to Heaven,' he had said, 'that my course were determined for me,' and at once, that same night, within an hour, Heaven had responded to the call.

CHAPTER V.

RIPE AND DROPPED.

MRS. SIDEBOTTOM slept soundly, only troubled by the mistake about the tablecloth. The captain slept soundly, troubled by nothing at all. The scream of steam-whistle, the bray of buzzer and bawl of syren, the jangle of alarm bells, and the hum of voices outside their windows did not rouse them. They had

become accustomed to these discordant noises which startled the ears every morning early, to rouse the mill-hands and call them from their beds. Moreover, the whistles and buzzers and syrens were not in the town, but were below in the valley, at some distance, and distance modified some of the dissonance.

It is true that Mrs. Sidebottom dreamed, and to dream is not to enjoy perfect rest. She dreamt that her brother Jeremiah was examining the tablecloth, and that she was dribbling water over the sheet out of a marrow-spoon, in patterns, to give it an appearance of being figured with acorns and oak-leaves. And she found in her dreams that Jeremiah was hard to persuade that what he had before him was a figured damask tablecloth and not a sheet. And she thought how she assured her brother on her word that what he saw was a watered table-cover, and mightily pleased she was with herself at her ingenuity in equivocation.

But towards morning the house was roused by violent ringing at the front door bell, and by calls under the windows, and gravel thrown at the panes. The watchman had come, at Salome's desire, to inquire if by chance Mr. Pennycomequick was there. He had gone out, after his return home, and had not returned or been seen. Fears were entertained that he might have been swept away in the flood.

'Flood! what flood?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom.

'The valley is full of water. Holroyd reservoir be busted.'

'And—Mr. Pennycomequick has not been seen?'

'No, ma'am. Miss Cusworth thought there might be a chance he had come back here and was staying talking.'

'He has not been here since he dined with us.'

'He said he was boun' to take a stroll on t' towpath. I see'd him there. If he's not got off it afore the flood came down he's lost.'

'Lost! Fiddlesticks! I mean—bless my soul.' Mrs. Sidebottom's heart stood still for a moment. What! Jeremiah ripe, and dropped from the tree already. Jeremiah gone down the river with the *anges-à-cheval* inside him that he had enjoyed so recently.

She ran upstairs and hammered at her son's door. His window looked out on the valley, not into the street, and he had not been roused at the same time as his mother. As she ran, the thought came to her uncalled, like temptations, 'I needn't have had champagne at six-and-six. It does not matter after all that the sheet and the tablecloth changed places. I might just as well have had cheap grapes.'

'Lamb!' she called through the door, 'Lamb! Do get up. Your uncle is drowned. Slip into your garments. He has been swept away by the flood. Don't stay to shave, you shaved before dinner; and your prayers can wait. Do come as quickly as possible. Not a minute is to be lost.'

She opened his door, and saw her son with a disordered head and sleepy eyes, stretching himself. He had tumbled out of his bed and into his dressing-gown. There was gas in the room, turned down to a pea when not required for light; and this the captain, when roused, had turned up again.

'Oh, Lamb! Do bestir yourself. Do you hear that your uncle is dead, and that he has been carried away by a flood? It is most advisable that we should be in his house before the Cusworths or the servants have made away with anything. These are the critical moments, when things disappear and cannot be traced afterwards. No one but the Cusworths know what he had, there may be plate and jewellery that belonged to his mother. I cannot tell. We do not know what money there is in the house, and what securities he has in his strong box. My dear Lamb! Yes, brush your hair, and don't look stupid. You may lose a

great deal by lack of promptitude. Of course we must be in charge. The Cusworths have no *locus standi*. I shall dismiss them at the earliest convenience. Good gracious me, what things you men are! If you go to bed you get frouzy and rumpled in a way women never do. I have noticed, in crossing the Channel, how a man who gets sea-sick breaks up altogether and becomes disreputable; whereas a woman may have been ten times as ill, yet when she steps ashore she is decent and presentable. I can wait for you no longer. I shall go on by myself. When you are ready, follow.'

Mrs. Sidebottom ran back to her room, and was equipped to start in an incredibly short time. When she again came forth she looked into her son's room once more, and said, 'I do hope and trust, Lamb, that your uncle took his keys with him. It would be too frightful to suppose that he had left them behind, and that these Cusworths should have had the house to themselves and the keys all this while.'

Mrs. Sidebottom hastened to the residence of her half-brother, which stood on the slope of the hill a few minutes' walk from the factory. There was now sufficient light for her to see that the whole basin of the Keld was occupied by water, that not the fields only, but the mill-yards as well were inundated. The entire population of Mergatroyd was awake and afoot, and giving tongue like a pack of beagles. The street or road leading down the hill into the valley was crowded with people, some hurrying down to the water, others ascending, laden with goods from the houses that had been invaded by water. The cottagers in the bottom had escaped, or were being rescued. What had become of the workers in Mitchell's no one knew, and fears were entertained for them. The mill itself stood above the water, but if the hands engaged in it had attempted to leave it, they must have been overtaken and carried away by the flood. Fortunately

the majority of the mills were nearer the hillsides than Mitchell's, so that escape from them was comparatively easy. The rush of the torrent had been along the course of the river and canal, and though the water surged against the wall that enclosed the mill-folds, and even entered the walls and swamped the basements of the houses therein, it was with reduced force.

Mrs. Sidebottom gave little attention to the scenes of havoc, to the distress and alarm that prevailed. Her one dread was lest she should reach her brother's house too late to prevent its pillage.

When she arrived there she found that Salome was not in, that Mrs. Cusworth, a feeble and sickly woman, was frightened and incapacitated from doing anything, and that the servants were out in the streets.

'What made my brother go out?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom; 'why was he not in bed like a Christian?'

'He had been sitting up, talking with Salome,' answered the widow, 'and as he had taken no exercise for two days, and did not feel sleepy, he said he would take a short walk.'

'What keys has he left, and where are they? I do not mean the key of the groceries, or of the cellar, but of his papers and cash-box.'

Mrs. Cusworth did not know. She had nothing to do with these keys; she supposed that Mr. Pennycomequick carried them about with him.

'Probably,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'but gentlemen when going out to dinner sometimes forget to take the keys out of their pockets and put them in those of the dress suit. I had a husband. He did it, and many a lecture I have given him for his want of prudence. Do you know where his everyday clothes are? I suppose he went abroad in his dress coat and smalls. I had better have a look and make sure.'

Mrs. Cusworth thought, in reply, that probably the clothes would be found in Mr. Pennycomequick's bedroom.

'There is a light in it, I suppose,' said his half-sister. 'By-the-way, who had charge of the plate?'

'I have,' answered the widow.

'You have, then, the key of the plate-chest?'

'There is no plate-chest. There is a cupboard.'

'Iron-plated?'

'Oh no; there is no silver, or very little—only some teaspoons, all the rest is electro. But do you think, Mrs. Sidebottom, that dear Mr. Pennycomequick is—is lost?' The widow's eyes filled and she began to cry.

'Lost! oh, of course.'

'But we cannot tell, we do not know, but he may have taken refuge somewhere.'

'Fiddlesticks—I mean, hardly likely. He was on the towpath, and there is no place of refuge he could reach from that.'

'Really dead! really dead!' The poor widow broke down.

'Dead, of course, he is dead, with all this water. Bless me! You would not call in the ocean to drown him. I have known a case of a man in the prime of life who was smothered in six inches.'

'Yes, but he may have left the towpath in time, and then, instead of returning home, have gone about helping the poor creatures who have been washed out of their houses, and some of them have not had time to get into their clothes. It would be like his kind heart to remain out all night rendering every assistance in his power.'

'There is something in that,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, and her face became slightly longer. 'He has not been found.'

'No, not yet.'

Mrs. Sidebottom mused.

'I don't see,' she said, 'how he can have got away if he went on the towpath. I have heard he was seen going on to it. The towpath is precisely where

the greatest danger lay. It is exactly there that the current of the descending flood would reach what you would call its maximum of velocity. Is not Salome come in yet? Why is she out? What is she doing?'

Then in came her son, in trim order; neither the danger in which his uncle might be, nor his prospect of inheriting that uncle's fortune, could induce Lambert to appear partially dressed. His mother drew him aside into the dining-room.

'Lambert,' she said, 'there is no plate. I am not sorry for it, for if Jeremiah had laid out money in buying silver, he would have gone in for King's pattern, or Thread and Shell—which are both odious, vulgar and ostentatious, only seen on the tables of the *nouveaux riches*.'

'Is my uncle not returned?'

'No, Lamb! and, there is a good soul, run down the road, bestir yourself, and ascertain whether the towpath, to which your uncle Jeremiah said he was going, is really submerged, and to what depth, and ascertain also at what rate the current runs, and whether it is likely to subside. Mrs. Cusworth thinks it not impossible that your uncle may be helping the wretches who are getting out of their bedroom windows, or are perched on the roofs of their houses. Oh, Lamb! if your uncle were to turn up after the agony of mind he has occasioned me, I could hardly bear it; I would go into hysterics. My dear Lamb! do keep that old woman talking whilst I run upstairs to Jeremiah's dressing-room. I must get at his every-day smalls, and see if he has left his keys in the pocket; men do such inconsiderate things. I must do this as a precaution, you understand, lest the keys should fall into improper hands, into the hands of designing and unscrupulous persons, who have no claim on my brother whatever, and no right to expect more than a book or a teacup as a remembrancer.

Lamb! it looks suspicious that Salome should keep out of the way now. Goodness gracious! what if she has been beforehand with me, and is out concealing the spoils! Go, Lamb, make inquiries after your uncle, and keep an eye open for Salome. The girl is deep. I will go and search the pockets of your uncle's panjams, pepper and salt; I know them. We must not put or allow temptations to lie in the way of the unconscientious.'

CHAPTER VI.

A COTTAGE PIANO.

MR. PENNYCOMEQUICK had but just reached the hut of the keeper of the locks when he saw a great wave rushing down on him. It extended across the valley from bank to bank, it overswept the raised sides of canal and river, and confounded both together, and, as if impelled by the antagonism of modern socialism against every demarcation of property, caused the hedges of the several fields and bounding walls to disappear, engulfed or overthrown.

The hut was but seven feet high on one side and six on the other, and was small—a square brick structure with a door on one side and a wooden bench on that toward the locks. Unfortunately the hut had been run up on such economical principles that the bricks were set on their narrow sides, instead of being superimposed on their broad sides, and thus made a wall of but two and a half inches thick, ill-calculated to resist the impetus of a flood of water, but serviceable enough for the purpose for which designed—a shelter against weather. It was roofed with sandstone slate at a slight incline. Fortunately the door looked to the east, so that the current did not enter and exert its accumulated strength against

the walls to drive them outwards. The door had been so placed because the west wind was that which brought most rain on its wings.

Jeremiah put a foot on the bench, and with an alacrity to which he had long been a stranger, heaved himself upon the roof of the shelter, not before the water had smitten it and swirled about the base and foamed over his feet. Had he not clung to the roof he would have been swept away. To the west the darkness remained piled up, dense and undiluted, as though the clouds there contained in them another forty-eight hours of rain. A very Pelion piled on Ossa seemed to occupy the horizon, but above this the vault became gradually clearer, and the crescent moon poured down more abundant light, though that was not in itself considerable.

By this light Jeremiah could see how widespread the inundation was, how it now filled the trough of the Keld, just as it must have filled it in the remote prehistoric age, when the western hills were sealed in ice, and sent their frosty waters burdened with ice-bergs down the valleys they had scooped out, and over rocks which they furrowed in their passage.

Jeremiah looked at the lock-keeper's cottage, not any longer as a possible place of refuge, but out of compassion for the unfortunate man who was in it. Not a sound issued thence; not a light gave token that he had been roused in time to effect his escape, if only to the roof. Probably, almost certainly, he and his wife were floating as corpses in their little room on the ground floor.

Away on the ridge to the north, yellow lights were twinkling, and thence came sounds of life. The steam calls had ceased to shrill; they had done their work. No one slept in Mergatroyd—no one in all the towns, villages, and hamlets down the valley of the Keld—any more that night, save those who, smothered by the water, slept to wake no more.

Hard by the lock, growing out of the enbankment, stood a Lombardy poplar. The sudden blast of wind accompanying the water had twisted and snapped it, but had not wholly severed the top from the stump. It clung to this, attached by ligaments of bark and fibres of wood. The stream caught at the broken tree-top that trailed on the causeway, shook it impatiently, dragged it along with it, ripped more of the nerves that fastened it, and seemed intent on carrying it wholly away.

Notwithstanding his danger and extreme discomfort, with his boots full of water, Jeremiah was unable to withdraw his eyes for long from the broken tree, the top of which whipped the base of his place of refuge; for he calculated whether, in the event of the water undermining the hut, he could reach the stump along the precarious bridge of the broken top.

But other objects presented themselves, gliding past, to distract his mind from the tree. By the wan and straggling light he saw that various articles of an uncertain nature were being whirled past; and the very uncertainty as to what they were gave scope to the imagination to invest them with horror.

For awhile the water roared over the sluice, but at last the immense force exerted on the valves tore them apart, wrenched one from its hinges, threw it down, and the torrent rolled triumphantly over it; it did not carry the door off, which held still to its lower hinge, at least for a time, though it twisted the iron in its socket of stone.

The water was racing along, now noiselessly, but with remorseless determination, throwing sticks, straw, and then a drowned pig at the obstructive hut. At one moment a boat shot past. If it had but touched the hut, Jeremiah would have thrown himself into it, and trusted that it would be stranded in shallow water. He knew how insecure was the building that sustained him. There was no one in the boat. It

had been moored originally by a rope, which was snapped, and trailed behind it.

The moon flared out on the water, that looked like undulating mercury, and showed a dimple on its surface above the hut; a dimple formed by the water that was parted by the obstruction; and about this eddy sticks and strands were revolving. Then there approached a cradle in which whimpered a babe. On the cradle stood a cat that had taken refuge there from the water, when it found no other spot dry for its feet. And now the cradle swung from side to side, and as it tilted, the cat leaped to the upraised side, mee-awing pitifully, and then, as the strange boat lurched before a wave on the other side, the cat skipped back again to where it was before, with tail erect and plaintive cry, but, by its instinctive shiftings, preserving the balance of the little craft. The cradle was drawn down between the walls where the sluice had been, and whether it passed in safety beyond, Jeremiah could not see.

Now his attention was arrested by a huge black object sailing down stream, reeling and spinning as it advanced. What was it? A house lifted bodily and carried along? Jeremiah watched its approach with uneasiness; if it struck his brick hut it would probably demolish it. As it neared, however, he was relieved to discover that it was a hayrick; and on it, skipping from side to side, much as the cat had skipped on the cradle, he observed a fluttering white figure.

Now he saw that a chance offered better than that of remaining on the fragile hut. The bricks would give way, but the hayrick must float. If he could possibly swing himself on to the hay, he would be in comparative safety, for it is of the nature of strong currents to disembarrass themselves of the cumbrous articles wherewith they have burdened themselves and throw them away along their margins, strewing with them the fields they have temporarily overflowed.

It was, however, difficult in the uncertain light to judge distances, and calculate the speed at which the floating island came on, and the rick struck the hut before Jeremiah was prepared to leap. He, however, caught at the hay, and tried to scramble into the rick that overtopped him, when he was thrown down, struck by the white figure that leaped off the hay and tumbled on the roof, over him. In another instant, before Jeremiah could recover his feet, the rick had made a revolution and was dancing down the stream, leaving a smell of hay in his nose, and the late tenant of the stack sprawling at his side.

'You fool!' exclaimed Mr. Pennycomequick angrily, 'what have you come here for?'

'I could hold on no longer. I was giddy. I thought there was safety here.'

'Less chance here than on the rick you have deserted. You have spoiled your own chance of life and mine.'

'I'm starved wi' caud,' moaned the half-naked man, 'I left my bed and got through t'door as t'water came siping in, and I scram'led up on to t'rick. I never thowt t'rick would ha' floated away.'

'Here, then,' said Jeremiah, removing his great coat, but with a bad grace, 'take this.'

'That's better,' said the man, without a word of thanks, as he slipped into the warm overcoat. 'Eh! now,' said he, 'if t'were nobbut for the way t'rick spun aboot, I could na' ha' stuck there. I wouldn't ha' gone out o' life, spinning like a skoprill' (teetotum), 'not on no account; I'd a-gone staggering into t'other world, and ha' been took for a drunkard, and I'm a teetotaller, have been these fifteen years. Fifteen years sin' I took t'pledge, and never bust out but once.'

'You have water enough to satisfy you now,' said Jeremiah grimly.

'Dost'a want to argy?' asked the man. 'Becos if

so, I'm the man for thee, Peter—one, three, twenty, what dost'a say to that, eh?'

Jeremiah was in no mood to argue, nor was the time or place suitable; but not so thought this fanatic, to whom every time and place was appropriate for a dispute about alcohol.

'I wonder whether the water is falling,' said the manufacturer, drawing himself away from his companion and looking over the edge into the current. He saw apples, hundreds of apples swimming past; a long wavering line of them coming down the stream, like migrating ants, or a Rechabite procession, turning over, bobbing, but all in sequence one behind the other. By daylight they would have resembled a chain of red and yellow beads, but now they showed as jet grains on silver. They had come, no doubt, from a farmer's store or out of a huckster's cart.

Jeremiah leaned over the eave of the hut to test the distance of the water; then caught an apple and threw it on the roof, whence it rolled over and rejoined the procession on the further side.

''Tis a pity now,' muttered the man in nightshirt and topcoat, ''tis a pity aboot my bullock, I were bown to sell'n a Friday.'

Suddenly Jeremiah recoiled from his place, for, dancing on the water was a human body, a woman, doubtless, for there was a kerchief about the head, and in the arms a child, also dead. The woman's eyes were open, and the moon glinted in the whites. They seemed to be looking and winking at Jeremiah. Then a murky wave washed over the face, like a hand passed over it, but it did not close the eyes, which again glimmered forth. Then, up rose the corpse, lifted by the water, but seeming to struggle to gain its feet. It was caught in that swirl, that dimple Jeremiah had noticed on the face of the flood above his place of refuge.

How cruel the current was! Not content with

drowning human beings, it romped with them after the life was choked out of them, it played with them ghastly pranks. The undercurrent sucked the body back, and then ran it against the bricks, using it as a battering-ram. Then it caught the head of the poplar and whipped the corpse with it, as though whipping it on to its work which it was reluctant to perform. The manufacturer had gone out that night with his umbrella, and had carried it with him to the roof of the hut. Now with the crook he sought to disengage the dead woman and thrust her away from the wall into the main current; he could not endure to see the body impelled headlong against the bricks.

'What art a' doing?' asked the man, also looking over. Then, after a moment he uttered a cry, drew back, clasped his hands, then looked again, and again exclaimed: 'Sho's my own lass, and sho's a hugging my bairn!'

'What do you mean?'

'It's my wife, eh! 'tis a pity.'

Mr. Pennycomequick succeeded in disengaging the corpse and thrusting it into the stream; it was caught and whirled past. The man looked after it, and moaned.

'It all comes o' them fomentations,' he said. 'Sho'd bad pains aboot her somewhere or other, and owd Nan sed sho'd rub in a penn'orth o' whisky. I was agin it, I was agin it—my mind misgave me, and now sho's taken and I'm left, 'cos I had nowt to do wi' it.'

'You may as well prepare to die,' said Jeremiah, 'whisky or no whisky. This hut will not stand much longer.'

'I shudn't mind so bad if I'd sold my bullock,' groaned the man. 'I had an offer, but, like a fool, I didn't close. Now I'm boun' to lose everything. 'Tis vexing.'

Just then a heavy object was driven against the

wall, and shook the hut to its foundations, shook it so that one of the stone slates was dislodged and fell into the water. Jeremiah leaned over the eaves and looked again. He could make out that some piece of furniture, what he could not distinguish, was thrust against the wall of the hut. He saw two legs of turned mahogany, with brass castors at the ends that glistened in the moonlight. They were about four feet and a half apart, and supported what might be a table or secretaire. The rushing water drove these legs against the wall, and the castors ran and felt about the bricks as groping for a weak joint where they might knock a hole through. Then, all at once, the legs drew or fell back, and as they did so the upper portion of the piece of furniture opened and disclosed white and black teeth, in fact, revealed a keyboard. This was but for a moment, then the instrument was heaved up by a wave, the lid closed over the keys, and the two brass-armed legs were again impelled against the fragile wall.

It is hardly to be wondered at that the ancients attributed living souls to streams and torrents, or peopled their waves with mischievous nixes, for they act at times in a manner that seems fraught with intelligence. It was so now. Here was this hut, an obstruction to the flood, feeble in itself, yet capable of resisting its first impetus, and likely to defy it altogether. The water alone could not dissolve it, so it had called other means and engines of destruction to its aid. At first, in a careless, thoughtless fashion, it had thrown a dead pig against it, then the corpse of a woman weighted with her dead babe; and now, having cast these away as unprofitable tools, it brought up, at great labour—a cottage piano. A piano is perhaps the heaviest and most cumbrous piece of furniture that the flood could have selected, and, on the whole, the best adapted to serve its purpose, as the deceased pig was the least. What force

it must have exerted to bring up this instrument, what judgment it must have employed in choosing it! And what malignity there was in the flood in its persistent efforts to break down the frail substructure on which stood the two men! The iron framework of the instrument in the wooden back was under water, the base with the pedals rested against the foot of the hut. The water driving at the piano thus lodged, partially heaved it, as though a shoulder had been submitted to the back of the instrument, and thus the feet were driven with sharp, impatient strokes against the bricks. Moreover, every time that the piano fell back, the lid over the keys also fell back, and the white line of keys laughed out in the moonlight. But whenever the wave heaved up the piano, then the lid fell over them. It was horrible to watch the piano labouring as a willing slave to batter down the wall, as it did so opening and shutting its mouth, as though alternately gasping for breath and then returning to its task with grim resolution.

The moon was now disentangled from cloud; it shone with sharp brilliancy out of a wide tract of cold gray sky, and the light was reflected by the teeth of the keyboard every time they were disclosed.

Hark! The clock of Mergatroyd church struck three. The dawn would not break for two or three hours.

'I say, art a minister?' suddenly asked the man in a nightshirt and great-coat.

'No; I am not,' answered the manufacturer impatiently. 'Never mind what I am. Help me to get rid of this confounded cottage-piano.'

'There, there!' exclaimed the man; 'now thou'rt swearing when thou ought to be praying. Why dost'a wear a white tie and black claes if thou ba'nt a minister? Thou might as weel wear a blue ribbon and be a drunkard.'

Mr. Pennycomequick did not answer the fellow. The man was crouched in squatting posture on the

roof, holding up one foot after another from the cold slates that numbed them. His nightshirt hung as a white fringe below his great-coat. To the eye of an entomologist, he might have been taken for a gigantic specimen of the Camberwell Beauty.

'If thou'd 'a been a minister, I'd 'a sed nowt. As thou'rt not, I knaw by thy white necktie thou must 'a been awt to a dancing or a dining soirée. And it were all along of them soirées that the first Flood came. We knaws it fra' Scriptur', t'folkes were eaten' and drinkin'. If they'd been drinkin' water, it hed never 'a come. What was t'Flood sent for but to wash out alcohol? and it's same naaw.'

Mr. Pennycomequick paid no heed to the man; he was anxiously watching the effect produced by the feet of the piano on the walls.

'It was o' cause o' these things the world was destroyed in the time o' Noah, all but eight persons as wore the blue ribbon.'

Again the forelegs of the piano crashed against the bricks, and now dislodged them, so that the water tore through the opening made.

'There's Scriptur' for it,' pursued the fellow. 'Oh, I'm right! but my toes are mortal could. Don't we read that Noah and his family was saved by water? Peter, one, two, three, twenty—answer me that. That's a poser for thee—saved because they was teetotalers.'

At that moment part of the wall gave way, and some of the roof fell in.

'Our only chance is to reach the poplar-stump,' said Jeremiah. 'Come along with me.'

'Nay, not I,' answered the man. 'The ships o' Tarshish was saved because Jonah was cast overboard. Go, then, and I'll stay here and be safe. I'll no be any mair i' t'same box wi' an alcohol-drinker.'

He drew up his feet under him, and put his fingers into his mouth to warm them.

Mr. Pennycomequick did not delay to use persuasion. If the man was fool enough to stay, he must stay. He slipped off the top of the hut, and planted one foot on the piano, then the other; his only chance was to reach the broken poplar, scramble up it, and lodge in its branches till morning. To do this he must reach it by the broken top that at present was caught between the legs of the piano, so that the water brushed up over the twigs. Jeremiah sprang among the boughs, and tried to scramble along it. Probably his additional weight was all that was required to snap the remaining fibres that held the portions together, for hardly was Mr. Pennycomequick on it than the strands yielded, and down past the crumbling hut rushed the tree-top, laden with its living burden, entangled, laced about with the whip-like branches, and as he passed he saw the frail structure dissolve like a lump of sugar in boiling water and disappear.

CHAPTER VII.

TAKING POSSESSION.

THE valley of the Keld for many miles above and below Mergatroyd presented a piteous spectacle when day dawned. The water had abated, but was not drained away. The fields were still submerged. Factories stood as stranded hulls amidst shallow lagoons, and were inaccessible, their fires extinguished, their mechanism arrested, their stores spoiled. The houses in the 'folds' were deserted, or were being cleared of their inhabitants.* From the windows of

* For the enlightenment of the uninitiated it will be as well to describe a fold. About some mills are yards, and the enclosing walls of these yards form the backs of cottages facing inwards on the mill, which are occupied by operatives working in the factory.

some of these houses men and women were leaning and shouting for help. They had been caught by the water, which invaded the lower story, locally called the 'ha'ase,' when asleep in the bedrooms overhead, and now, hungry and cold and imprisoned, they clamoured for release. Boats were scarce. Such as had been possessed by manufacturers and others had been kept by the river, and these had been broken from their moorings and carried away. Rafts were extemporized out of doors and planks; and as the water was shallow and still in the folds, they served better than keels. One old woman had got into a 'peggy' tub and launched herself in it, to get stranded in the midst of a wide expanse of water, and from her vessel she screamed to be helped, and dared not venture to move lest she should upset her tub and be shot out.

Not many lives, apparently, had been lost in the parish of Mergatroyd. Mr. Pennycomequick was missing, and the man at the locks with his wife had not been seen, and their cottage was still inaccessible. But great mischief had been wrought by the water. Not only had the stores in the mills been damaged, and the machinery injured by water and grit getting into it, and boilers exploded by the shock, but also because the swirl of the torrent had disturbed the subsoil of gravel and undermined the walls. Fissures formed with explosions like the report of guns; one chimney that had leaned before was now so inclined and overbalanced that its fall was inevitable, and was hourly expected.

All the gas jets fed from the main that descended into the valley were extinguished, and it was apparent that the rush of water had ploughed up the ground to the depths of the main, and had ruptured it. Walls that had run across the direction of the stream had been thrown over; the communication between the two sides of the valley was interrupted. It was un-

certain whether the bridge was still in existence. The railway had been overflowed, and the traffic stopped. The canal banks and locks had suffered so severely that it would be useless for the barges for many months.

Tidings arrived during the day from the upper portion of the valley, and it appeared that the destruction of life and property had been greatest where the wave burst out from between the confining hills, before it had space in which to spread, and in spreading to distribute its force. Heartrending accounts came in, some true, some exaggerated, some false, but all believed.

That night of terror and ruin did not see the roll of death made up. Such catastrophes have far-reaching effects. The wet, the exposure, the shock, were sure to produce after-sickness and succeeding mortality.

With ready hospitality, the parsonage, the inns, the houses of the well-to-do, were thrown open to receive those temporarily homeless, and food, warmth and clothing were forced upon them. But such as were received felt that they could not protract their stay and burden unduly their hosts, and insisted on returning prematurely to their sodden houses, there to contract rheumatic fevers and inflammations.

Twenty years ago, the author of this story wrote an account of such a disaster in a novel, the first on which he essayed his pen. Time has rolled away, and like the flood, has buried much; and amongst the things it has swept off and sunk in oblivion is that book. Probably not a dozen copies of it exist. He may now be permitted to repeat what was there written, when the impression produced by the cataclysm was fresh and vivid; and let not the rare possessor of the lost novel charge him with plagiarism if he repeats something of his former description.

Near the spot where the Keld left the hills had stood a public-house called the Horse and Jockey. The full violence of the descending wave fell on it

and effaced it utterly. The innkeeper's body was never found; the child's cradle, with the child in it, had gone down the stream, kept from overbalancing by the kitchen cat, and so escaped destruction. The beer casks floated ashore some miles down, were never claimed, and were tapped and drunk dry by some roughs. The sign of Horse and Jockey came to land twenty miles away, unhurt; it was the most worthless article the house had possessed. About a mile and a half above Mergatroyd was a row of new cottages, lately erected on money borrowed from a building society. They were of staring red brick, with sandstone heads to doors and windows; the flood carried away three out of the four.

In the first lived a respectable wool-picker with wife and children, all Wesleyans. He and his wife and child were swept from life in a moment, and supplied the preacher at their chapel with a topic for his next Sunday's discourse.

In the second lived a widow, who sold 'spice,' that is to say, sweets, together with sundry articles in the grocery line; a mighty woman, rotund and red, with a laugh and a joke for everyone; a useful woman to mothers in their troubles, and to children with the toothache, whooping cough, and other maladies. Black bottle and peppermint drops, Mother Bunch's syrup, soothing powders, porous plasters, embrocations, and heal-alls various, and of various degrees of mischievousness, were her specifics, and when the doses were nasty her lemon-drops and sugar-candy were freely given to cleanse the mouth of the taste of medicine. Now, she was gone down the river, her lollipops dissolved, her medicines dispersed. Away she had gone, floundering and spluttering, till her lungs were filled with the fluid she involuntarily imbibed, and then she sank and was caught among some sunken tree-snags, and her body was afterwards recovered from among them.

In the third cottage resided a musical shoemaker, a man with one love, and that the love of his bass viol. A wiry, solemn man, greatly in request at all concerts, able to conduct a band, or take almost any instrument himself, but loving best—a viol.

Now, he was gone, and grit had been washed into the sacred case of the cherished instrument, ruined along with its master.

In the last cottage of the row lived a drunken, good-for-nothing fellow, who did odd jobs of work; a fellow who had driven his own wife with her bairns from the house, and lived with another woman, as intemperate as himself, and with a mouth as foul as his own. This house and those within were spared.

'Well, now,' said an elder to the preacher, after the sermon at Providence Chapel next Sunday, 'ah, did think thou wer't boun' to justify the ways o' Providence.'

'So I would if I could,' answered the preacher, 'but they b'aint justifiable.'

Where the folds and fields were not too deep in water, lads waded, collecting various articles that had drifted no one knew whence. Some oranges lodged in a corner were greedily secured and sucked. One man ran about displaying a laced lady's boot at the end of a walking-stick, which boot had been carried into his kitchen, and was useless unless he could discover the fellow. There was much merriment in spite of disaster. Yorkshire folk must laugh whatever happens, and jokes were bandied to and fro between those who rowed and waded and those who were prisoners in their upper chambers.

The pariahs of society were alive to their opportunities, and were descending the stream, claiming everything of value that was found as being their own lost property. In many cases their claims were allowed; in others the finder of some article, rather than surrender it to a man whom he suspected, would

cast it back into the water and bid him go further to recover it.

A higher type of pariah started subscriptions for the sufferers, and took many a toll on the sums accumulated for the purpose of relieving the distress.

What had become of Mr. Pennycomequick? That was the question in every mouth in Mergatroyd. Salome knew that he had left the house just after midnight to take a walk by the canal, and the watchman had seen him a little later on the towpath. Since then he had not been seen at all. It was probable that, hearing the alarm signals, he might have taken refuge somewhere; but where? That depended on where he was when the alarm was given. If he had ascended the canal he might have made his way into Mitchell's mill; that was a hope soon dispelled, for news came that he had not been seen there. If he had descended the canal it was inconceivable that he could have escaped, as there was no place of refuge to which he could have flown.

Mrs. Sidebottom had not a shadow of doubt that Jeremiah was dead. Not dead! Fiddlesticks! Of course he was dead. She acted on this conviction. She moved into her half-brother's house. It would not do, she argued, to leave it unprotected to be pillaged by those Cusworths. A death demoralized a house. It was like the fall of a general, all order, respect for property, sense of duty, ceased. Lambert should remain at home, where he had his comforts, his own room, and his clothes. There was no necessity for his moving.

'Besides,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I could never trust a man, especially with women. Talk of men as lords of creation! Why, they are wheedled and humbugged by women with the greatest facility. If Lambert were here, the Cusworths, the maids, would sack the house under his nose, and he perceive nothing. I know how it was when I was newly married. Then,

if anything went wrong among my domestics I sent Sidebottom down the kitchen-stairs to them. He returned crestfallen and penitent, convinced that he had wrongfully accused them, and that he was himself, in some obscure manner, to blame.'

Mrs. Sidebottom gave orders that her brother's room should be made ready for her.

'Uncle Jeremiah's room, mother!' exclaimed Lambert, in astonishment.

'Of course,' answered she. 'I am not going to leave that unwatched; why, that is the focus and centre of everything. What do I care if they steal the sugar, and pull some of the French plums out of the bag in the store-closet? I must sit at my post, keep my hand on the strong box and the bureau.'

'But suppose Uncle Jeremiah were to return?'

'He won't return. He cannot. He is drowned.'

'But the body has not been recovered.'

'Nor will it be; it has been washed down into the ocean.'

'Rather you than I sleep in his room,' said Lambert.

After a slight hesitation Mrs. Sidebottom said, in a low, confiding tone, 'I have found his keys. He left them in his dress-coat pocket. Now you see the necessity there is for me to be on the spot. I must have a search for the will.' Then she drew a long breath, and said, 'Now, Lamb, there is some chance of my heart's desire being accomplished. You will be able to drop one of your *n*'s.'

'Drop what, mother?'

'Drop one of the *n*'s in the spelling of your name. I have never liked the double *n* in Pennycomequick. It will seem more distinguished to spell the name with one *n*.'

The captain yawned and walked to the door.

'That is all one to me. I don't suppose that one *n* will bring me more money than two. By the way, have you written to Philip?'

'Philip!' echoed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Of course not. This is no concern of his. If he grumbles, we can say that we hoped against hope, and did not like to summon him till we were sure poor Jeremiah was no more. No, Lamb, we do not want Philip here, and if he comes he will find nothing to his advantage. Jeremiah very properly would not forgive his father, and he set us all an example, for in this nineteenth century we are all too disposed to leniency. I shall certainly not write to Philip.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Salome, who at this juncture appeared at the door. 'Were you mentioning Mr. Philip Pennycomequick?'

'Yes, I was,' answered Mrs. Sidebottom shortly.

Salome stood in the doorway, pale, with dark hollows about her eyes, and looking worn and harassed. She had been up and about all the night and following day.

'Were you speaking about sending for Mr. Philip Pennycomequick?' she asked.

'We were mentioning him; hardly yet considering about sending for him,' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Because,' said Salome, 'I have telegraphed for him. I thought he ought to be here.'

CHAPTER VIII.

IN ONE COMPARTMENT.

In a second-class carriage on the Midland line sat a gentleman and a lady opposite each other. He was a tall man, and was dressed in a dark suit with a black tie. His face had that set controlled look which denotes self-restraint and reserve. The lips were thin and closed, and the cast of the features was stern. The eyes, large and hazel, were the only apparently expressive features he possessed. There

is nothing that so radically distinguishes those who belong to the upper and cultured classes from such as move in the lower walks of life as this restraint of the facial muscles. It is not the roughness of the hand that marks off the manual worker from the man who walks in the primrose path of ease, but the cast of face, and that is due in the latter to the constant inexorable enforcement of self-control. In the complexity of social life it is not tolerable that the face should be the index of the mind. Social intercourse demands disguise, forbids frankness, which it resents as brusquerie, and the child from infancy is taught to acquire a mastery over expression. As the delicate hand-artificer has to obtain complete control over every nerve of his hand, so as to make no slurs or shakes, so also has the man admitted into the social guild to hold every muscle of his face in rigid discipline. This is specially the case with the priest and the lawyer and the doctor. Conceive what a hitch would ensue in conversation should the lady of the house allow a visitor to discern in the countenance that she was unwelcome, or for a man of taste to allow his contempt to transpire when shown by an amateur his artistic failures, or for the host to wince when an incautious guest has exposed the family skeleton! It is said that the late Lady Beaconsfield endured her finger to be jammed in the carriage-door without wince or cry, and continued listening or pretending to listen to her husband's conversation whilst driving to the House. All members of the cultured classes are similarly trained to smile and not change colour, to listen, perhaps to sing, when pinched and crushed and trodden on and in torture. Would a priest be endured in his parish if he did not receive every insult with a smile, or a barrister gain his cause if he suffered his face to proclaim his disbelief in its justice, or a doctor keep his patients if his countenance revealed what he thought of their complaints?

If we turn over the Holbein collection of portraits of the Court of Henry VIII. we see among princes and nobles the same faces that we find now in farm-houses and factories. The Wars of the Roses had dissolved all restraints, and men of the first Tudor reigns were the undisciplined children of an age of domestic anarchy. But it was otherwise later. The portraits of Van Dyck and Lely show us gentlemen and ladies of perfect dignity and self-restraint.

What is also remarkable is that each age in the past seems to have had its typal cast of countenance and form of expression. The cavaliers of Charles I. have their special characteristics that distinguish them as much from the courtiers of Elizabeth as from those of Charles II. With Queen Anne another phase of portraiture set in, because the faces were different, and again in the Hanoverian period how unlike were the gentlemen of the Regency from those of the first Georges! Difference in dress does not explain this difference of face. The men and women in each epoch had their distinct mode of thought, fashion in morals and manners, and the face accommodated itself to these.

And at the present day that which cleaves class from class is the mode of thought in each, the rule of association that governs intercourse in their several planes; and these affect the character of face in each, so that the classes are distinguished by their countenances as they were by ages in the past.

When collier Jack calls bargee Jim a blackguard, Jim replies with a curse on the collier's eyes, which he damns to perdition. But if collier Jack says the same thing to gentleman Percy, the latter raises his hat, bows, and passes on.

Education, if complete, does not merely sharpen the intellect and refine the manners, but it gives such a complete polish that affronts do not dint or adhere; they glide off instead, leaving no perceptible trace of

impact. To the outward appearance, Christianity and culture produce an identical result, but only in outward appearance, for the former teaches the control of the emotions, whereas the latter merely forbids their expression.

The face of the gentleman who sat opposite this lady in the carriage was an intelligent, even clever face, but was somewhat hard. He looked at his companion once when he entered the carriage, hesitating whether to enter, and then glanced round to see whether there was another passenger in the compartment before he took a seat. There was at the time an elderly gentleman in the carriage, and this decided him to set his valise and rugs on the seat, and finally to take his place in the corner. If he had not seen that elderly man, with the repugnance single gentlemen so generally entertain against being shut in with a lady unattended, especially if young and pretty, he would have gone elsewhere. Where the carcase is there will the vultures gather. That is inevitable; but no sane dromedary will voluntarily cast himself into a cage with vultures.

The old gentleman left after a couple of stages, and then, for the rest of the journey, these two were enclosed together. As the man left, Philip looked out after him, with intent to descend, remove his baggage, and enter the next compartment, before or behind; but saw that one was full of sailor boys romping, and the other with a family that numbered among it a wailing baby. He therefore drew back, with discontent at heart, and all his quills ready to bristle at the smallest attempt of the lady to draw him into conversation.

The train was hardly in movement before that attempt was made.

'You are quite welcome to use my footwarmer,' she said.

'Thank you, my feet are not cold,' was the ungracious reply.

'I have had it changed twice since I left town,' she pursued, 'so that it is quite hot. The porters have been remarkably civil, and the guard looks in occasionally to see that I am comfortable.'

'In expectation of a tip,' thought the gentleman, but he said nothing.

'The French are believed to be the politest people in the world,' continued the lady, not yet discouraged, 'but I must say that the English railway porter is far in advance of the French one. On a foreign line you are treated as a vagabond, on the English as a guest.'

Still he said nothing. The lady cast an almost appealing glance at him. She had travelled a long way for a great many hours, and was weary of her own company. She longed for a little conversation.

'I cannot read in the train,' she said plaintively, 'it makes me giddy, and—I started yesterday from home.'

'In-deed,' said he in dislocated syllables. He quite understood that a hint had been conveyed to him, but he was an armadillo against hints.

The pretty young lady had not opened the conversation, if that can be called conversation which is one-sided, without having observed the young man's face, and satisfied herself that there was no more impropriety in her talking to one of so staid an air than if he had been a clergyman.

'What a bear this man is!' she thought.

He on his side said to himself, 'A forward missie! I wish I were in a smoking-carriage, though I detest the smell of tobacco.'

Pretty—uncommonly pretty the little lady was, with perfectly made clothes. The fit of the gown and the style of the bonnet proclaimed French make. She had lovely golden-red hair, large brown eyes, and a face of transparent clearness, with two somewhat hectic fire-spots in her cheeks. Her charming little mouth was now quivering with pitiful vexation.

A quarter of an hour elapsed without another word being spoken, and the gentleman was satisfied that his companion had accepted the rebuff he had administered, when she broke forth again with a remark.

'Oh, sir! excuse my seeming rudeness, but—you have been reading the newspaper, and I am on pins and needles to hear the news from France. It is true that I have just crossed the Channel from that dear and suffering—but heroic country; I am, however, very ignorant of the news. Unfortunately our journals are not implicitly to be relied on. The French are such a patriotic people that they cannot bring themselves to write and print a word that tells of humiliation and loss to their country. It is very natural, very noble—but inconvenient. That superb Faidherbe—I do trust he has succeeded in crushing the enemy.'

'He has been utterly routed.'

'Oh dear! Oh dear!' the little lady was plunged into real distress. 'This news was kept from me. That was why I was hurried away. I wanted to bring my nieces with me, the Demoiselles Labarte, but they clung to their mother and would not leave her. It was magnificent.' Then, after a sigh, 'Now, surely England will intervene.'

The gentleman shook his head.

'It is cruel. Surely one sister should fly to the assistance of the other.'

'The English nation is sister to the German.'

'Oh, how can you say so? William the Conqueror came from France.'

'From Normandy, which was not at the time and for long after considered a part of France.'

Then the gentleman, feeling he had been inveigled into saying more than he intended, looked out of the window.

Presently he heard a sob. The girl was crying.

He took no notice of her trouble. He had made up his mind that she was a coquette, and he was steeled against her various tricks to attract attention and enlist sympathy. He would neither smile when she laughed, nor drop his mouth when she wept. His lips closed somewhat tighter, and his brows contracted slightly. He had noticed throughout the journey the petty attempts made by this girl to draw notice to herself—the shifting of her shawls, the opening and shutting of her valise, the plaintive sighs, the tapping of the impatient feet on the footwarmer. Though he had studiously kept his eyes turned from her, nothing she had done had escaped him, and all went to confirm the prejudice with which he was inclined to regard her from the moment of his entering the carriage. He rose from his place and moved to the further end of the compartment.

'I beg your pardon,' said the young lady, 'I trust I have not disturbed you. You must excuse me, I am unhappy.'

'Quite so, and I would not for the world trespass on your grief.'

'I have a husband fighting under the Tricouleur, and I am very anxious about him.'

The gentleman made a slight acknowledgment with his head, which said unmistakably that he invited no further confidences.

This she accepted, and turned her face to look out of the opposite window.

At that moment the brake was put on, and sent a thrill through the carriage. Presently the train stopped. The face of the guard appeared at the window, and the little lady at once lowered the glass.

'How are you getting on, miss?'

'Very well, I thank you; but you must not call me miss; I am a married woman. I have left my husband in France fighting like a lion, and I am sent away because the Prussians are robbing and burning and

murdering wherever they go. I know a lady near Nogent from whose chateau they carried off an ormulu clock.' How unnecessary it was for her to enter into these details to the guard, thought the gentleman. He could not understand how a poor little heart full of trouble would long to pour itself out; how that certain natures can no more exist without sympathy than can plants without water.

'Don't you think, guard, that the English Government ought to interfere?'

'Well, ma'am, that depends on how it would affect traffic—on the Midland. Where are you going to, if I may ask?'

'Mergatroyd.'

'There has been a flood, and the embankment of the railway has been washed away. For a day there has not been any passing over the lines, and now we are ordered to go along uncommon leisurely.'

'But oh! guard, there is, I trust, no danger.'

'No, ma'am, none in the least; I'll take care that you come by no hurt. The worst that can happen is that we shall be delayed, and perhaps not be able to proceed the whole way in the same train. But rely on me, ma'am, I'll see to you.'

'Oh, guard, would you—would you mind? I have here a little bottle of nice Saint Julien, and I have not been able to touch it myself. Would you mind taking it? Also, here—here, under the bottle.'

She slipped some money into his hand.

The guard's red face beamed broad and benignant. He slipped the money into his waistcoat pocket, the bottle he stowed away elsewhere; then thrusting his head inside he said confidentially, 'Never fear. I'll make it all right for you, ma'am.'

When the lady, who was none other than Janet, the twin sister of Salome, mentioned Mergatroyd as her destination, the eyebrows of her fellow passenger were slightly lifted. He was looking out of the opposite

window to that at which she conversed with the guard. Now he knew that he would not be rid of his companion for the rest of the journey, for he also was on his way to Mergatroyd. There was but a single subject of comfort to him, that the distance to Mergatroyd was no longer great, and the time taken over it, in spite of the hint of the guard, which he discounted, could not be great either.

The short November day had closed in; and the remainder of the journey would be taken in the dark. The lamps had not yet been lighted in the carriage. To the west he could see through the window the brown light of the set day, the last rays of a wintry sun arrested by factory smoke. The gentleman was uneasy. If the dromedary will not voluntarily enter the cage of the vulture, he will not remain in it in darkness with her without tremors.

'When do you think, sir, that I shall reach Mergatroyd?' asked the young lady.

'That is a question impossible for me to answer,' replied the gentleman; 'as you heard from your friend' he emphasized this word and threw sarcasm into his expression, 'the guard, there are conditions, about which I know nothing, which will interfere with the punctuality of the train.'

Then he fumbled in his pocket, drew forth an orange-coloured envelope, from this took a scrap of pink paper, and by the expiring evening light read the telegraphic message in large pencil-marks.

'Your uncle lost. Come at once. Salome.'

Salome!—who was Salome?

He replaced the paper in the envelope, which was addressed Philip Pennycomequick, care of Messrs. Pinch and Squeeze, Solicitors, Nottingham.

The message was a brief one—too brief to be intelligible.

Lost—how was Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick lost?

When the train drew up at a small station, the young man returned to the down side, by the lady, let down the glass and called the guard.

'Here! what did you say about the flood? I have seen it mentioned in the paper, but I did not understand that it had been at Mergatroyd.'

'It has been in the Keld Valley.'

'And Mergatroyd is in that valley?'

'Where else would you have it, sir?'

'But—according to my paper the great damage was done at Holme Bridge.'

'Well, so it was; and Holme Bridge is above Mergatroyd.'

Philip Pennycomequick drew up the glass again. Now he understood. He had never been to Mergatroyd in his life, and knew nothing about its situation. He had skimmed the account of the flood in his paper, but had given most of his attention to the narrative of the war in France. It had not occurred to him to connect the 'loss' of his uncle with the inundation. He had supposed the word 'loss' was an euphemism for 'going off his head.' Elderly gentlemen do not get lost in England, least of all in one of its most densely populated districts, as if they were in the backwoods or prairies of America.

But who sent him the telegram? He had no relative of the name of Salome. His aunt, Mrs. Sidebottom, who was now resident, as he knew, at Mergatroyd, was named Louisa, and she was the person who, he supposed, would have wired to him if anything serious had occurred requiring his presence.

His companion was going to Mergatroyd, and probably knew people there. If he asked her whether she was aware of a person of the peculiar Christian name of Salome at that place, it was possible she might inform him. But he was too reserved and proud to ask. He would not afford this flighty piece of goods an excuse for opening conversation with him.

In half an hour he would be at his destination, and would then have his perplexity cleared.

The train proceeded leisurely. Philip's feet were now very cold, and he would have been grateful for the warmer, but could not now ask for permission to use what he had formerly rejected.

As the train proceeded the engine whistled.

There were men working on the line; at intervals coal fires were blazing and smoking in braziers. The train further slackened speed. Philip Pennycomequick could see that there was much water covering the country. The train had now entered the Valley of the Keld, and was ascending it.

What a nuisance it would be were he stopped and obliged to tarry for some hours till the road was repaired, tarry in cold and darkness, without a lamp in his carriage, caged in with that pretty, coquettish, dangerous minx, and with no third party present to serve as his protector.

The train came to a standstill. The young lady was uneasy. She lowered the glass and leaned out; and looked along the line at the flaming fires, the half-illumined navvies, the steam trailing away and mingling with the smoke, the fog that gathered over the inundated fields. A raw wind blew in at the open window.

Then up came the guard, sharply turned the handle and threw open the door. 'Everyone get out. The train can go no further.'

All the passengers were obliged to descend, dragging with them their rugs and bags, their cloaks, umbrellas, novels, buns and oranges—all the piles of *impedimenta* with which travellers encumber themselves on a journey, trusting to the prompt assistance of mercenary porters.

But on this night, away from any station, there were no porters. The descent from the carriage was difficult and dangerous. It was like clambering down

a ladder of which some of the rungs were broken. It was rendered doubly difficult by the darkness in which it had to be effected, and the difficulty was quadrupled by the passengers having to scramble down burdened with their effects. It was not accordingly performed in silence, but with screams from women who lost their footing, and curses and abuses launched against the Midland from the men.

Mr. Philip was obliged by common humanity to assist the young lady out of the carriage, and to collect and help to carry her manifold goods; for the civil guard was too deeply engaged to attend to her. He had received his fee, and was, therefore, naturally lavishing his attention on others, in an expectant mood.

Mr. Philip Pennycomequick somewhat ungraciously advised the companion forced on his protection to follow him. He engaged to see her across the dangerous piece of road and return for those of her wraps and parcels which he and she were together unable to transport to the train awaiting them beyond the faulty portion of the line.

The walk was most uncomfortable. It was properly not a walk but a continuous stumble. To step in the dark from sleeper to sleeper was not easy, and the flicker of the coal fires dazzled and confused rather than assisted the sight. The wind, moreover, carried the dense smoke in volumes across the line, suddenly enveloping and half stifling, but wholly blinding for the moment, the unhappy, bewildered flounderers who passed through it. In front glared the two red lights of an engine that waited with carriages to receive the dislodged passengers.

'You must take my arm,' said Mr. Philip to his companion. 'This is really dreadful. One old lady has, I believe, dislocated her ankle. I hope she will make a claim on the company.'

'Oh, dear! And Salome!—what will she say?'

'Salome?'

'Yes—my sister, my twin-sister.'

When Philip Pennycomequick did finally reach his destination, it was with a mind that prejudged Salome, and was prejudiced against her.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVAL.

'WHAT—no cabs? No cabs?' asked Philip Pennycomequick, on reaching the Mergatroyd Station. 'What a place this must be to call itself a town and have no convenience for those who arrive at it, to transport them to their destinations. Can one hire a wheelbarrow?' Philip was, as may be seen, testy. The train had not deposited him at the station till past seven, instead of four-eighteen, when due. He had been thrown into involuntary association with a young lady, whom he had set down to belong to a category of females that are to be kept at a distance—that is, those who, as he contemptuously described them, run after a hearth-brush because it wears whiskers. He misjudged Janet Baynes, as men of a suspicious temper are liable to misjudge simple and frank natures. There are men who, the more forward a woman is, so much the more do they recoil into their shells, to glower out of them at those who approach them, like a mastiff from its kennel, with a growl and a display of teeth.

Who this woman was with whom he had been thrown, Philip only knew from what she had told him and the guard. He was aware that she was the sister of his correspondent Salome, but he was ignorant as before who Salome was, less only the fact that she must be young, because the twin-sister of his fellow-passenger. If like her—and twins are usually

alike—she must be pretty, and as mental characteristics follow the features, like her coquettish, and ready to make love—as Philip put it—to the hearth-brush because of its whiskers.

At the station he had reckoned on finding a cab and driving to his destination, whilst his companion went off in another. But to his vexation he found that there were no cabs. He must engage a porter to carry his traps on a truck. He resolved to go first of all to his uncle's house and inquire whether he was lost in the flood, and if he had been heard of since the telegram was despatched. Then he would put up for the night at the inn, and his future movements would be regulated by the information he received.

'By the way,' said he to the porter, 'I suppose you have a decent hotel in the place, though it is deficient in cabs.'

'There are three inns,' answered the man, 'but all full as an excursion train on Good Friday. The poor folks that ha' been turned o't haase by t' water ha' been ta'en into 'em. Where art 'a going, sir?'

'To the house of Mr. Pennycomequick,' answered Philip.

'Right you are,' said the porter; 'Mrs. Baynes is also boun' to t'same, and I can take t'whole bag-o' tricks on one barrow.'

Philip turned to Janet Baynes with an impatient gesture, which with all his self-control he was unable to repress, and said:

'You are going to Mr. Pennycomequick's, I understand, madam.'

There was no avoiding it. The tiresome association could not be dissolved at once, it threatened to continue.

'Yes,' answered Janet, 'I spent all my life there till I married, and my mother and sister are there now.'

'Not relations of Mr. Pennycomequick?'

'Oh dear no. He has been like a father to us, because our own father was killed by an accident in his service. That was a long time ago, I cannot remember the circumstance. Ever since then we have lived in the house. We always call Mr. Pennycomequick our uncle, but he is no real relative.'

Philip strode forward, ahead of the porter; from the station the road ascended at a steep gradient, and the man came on slowly with the united luggage. Janet quickened her pace, and came up beside Philip.

It was like being beset by a fly in summer.

'Are you going to Mr. Pennycomequick's?' asked Janet, panting. She was a little out of breath with walking to keep up with her companion.

'Yes.'

'I am not strong. My breath goes if I hurry, especially in going up-hill.'

'Then, madam, let me entreat you to spare your lungs and relax your pace.'

'But then—we shall be separated, and we are going to the same house. Would you mind going just a wee bit slower?'

Philip complied without a word.

He questioned for a moment whether he should inform his fellow-passenger of the news that the uncle was lost. But he reflected that he knew nothing for certain. The message he had received could hardly have been couched in vaguer terms. It was quite possible that his explanation of it was false; it was also not at all improbable that the alarm given was premature. If Salome were like the young scatter-brain walking at his side, she would be precisely the person to cry 'Wolf!' at the first alarm. He might have inquired of the porter whether Mr. Pennycomequick had met with an accident, or whether anything had occurred at his house; but he preferred to wait, partly because he was too proud to inquire of

a porter, and partly because he was given no opportunity to questioning him out of hearing of his companion.

'Are you going to stay at uncle's?' asked Janet.

'I really am unable to answer that question.'

'But, as you have heard, all the inns are full. Have you any friends in Mergatroyd?'

'Relations—not friends.'

'What a delightful thing it must be to have plenty of relations! Salome and I have none. We were quite alone in the world, except for mother. Now I have, of course, all my husband's kindred, but Salome has no one.'

There was no shaking this girl off. She stuck to him as a burr. In all probability he would be housed at his uncle's that night, and so he would be brought into further contact with this person. She herself was eminently distasteful to him—but a sister unmarried!—Philip resolved to redouble his testy manner towards her. He would return to Nottingham on the morrow, unless absolutely compelled by circumstances to remain.

There was—there always had been—a vein of suspicion, breeding reserve of manner, in the Pennycomequick family. It was found chiefly in the men—in the women, that is, in Mrs. Sidebottom, it took a different form. As forces are co-related, so are tempers. It chilled their manner, it made them inapt to form friendships, and uncongenial in society.

Uncle Jeremiah had it, and that strongly. Towards his own kin he had never relaxed. The conduct of neither sister nor brother had been such as to inspire confidence. To the last he was hard, icy and suspicious towards them. But the warm breath of the little children had melted the frost in his domestic relations, and their conspicuous guilelessness had disarmed his suspicions. To them he had been a very different man to what he had appeared to others.

Philip's father had behaved foolishly, withdrawn his money from the firm, and in a fit of credulity had allowed himself to be swindled out of it by a smooth-tongued impostor, Schofield. That loss had reduced him to poverty, and had soured him. Thenceforth, the Pennycomequick characteristics which had been in abeyance in Nicholas ripened rapidly. Philip had learned from his father to regard the bulk of mankind as in league against the few, as characterized by self-seeking, and as unreliable in all that affected their own interests. Philip was aged thirty-four, but looked older than his years. The experiences he had passed through had prematurely fixed the direction of his tendencies, and had warped his views of life. In photography, impressions made on the sensitive plate rapidly fade unless dipped in a solution which gives them permanency. So is it with the incidents of life; pictures are formed in our brains and pass unnoticed, unregistered, till something occurs to fix them. The great misfortune which had befallen his father had acted as such a bath to Philip's mind, leaving on it the indelible impression of universal rascality. He could remember the comfort in which his childhood had been passed, and the grinding penury afterwards. Obliged to work for his livelihood, he had chosen the law, a profession ill calculated to counteract the tendency in him, inherent, and already declared, to regard all men as knaves or fools.

Nicholas's last years had been spent in useless repinings over his loss, in grumbling at his brother and sister for not coming to his aid, and in hatred of the man who had ruined him.

He had been too proud to appeal to his half-brother, and was angry with Jeremiah for not coming forward unsolicited to relieve him. Had he gone to his brother, even written to him to express regret for his injudicious conduct, it is probable, nay, certain, that Jeremiah would have forgiven him; but the false

pride of Nicholas prevented him taking this step, and Jeremiah would not move to his assistance without it.

Thus a mutual misunderstanding kept the half-brothers apart, and embittered their minds against each other.

Mrs. Sidebottom had been of as little help to her brother as had Jeremiah. Mr. Sidebottom had, indeed, taken Philip into his office as a clerk, but no Sidebottom contributions came to relieve the necessities of Nicholas. His sister was profuse in regrets and apologies for not doing anything for him, always weighting these apologies with a lecture on his wrong-doing in withdrawing his money from the firm; but she gave him nothing save empty words. Nicholas entertained but little love for his sister; and Philip grew up with small respect for his aunt.

By the time that Philip had reached the Pennycomequick door he was in as unamiable a temper as he had ever been during the thirty-four years of his life. He was damp, hungry, cold. He more than half believed that he had been brought to Mergatroyd on a fool's errand; he did not know where he was to sleep that night, and what he would get to eat. The inns, as he had heard, were full; no more trains would leave the station that night, owing to the condition of the line; there was not a cab in Mergatroyd, so that he could escape from the place only on foot, and that without his baggage.

Moreover, he was in doubt with what face he could appear before his uncle, were Jeremiah at home. His uncle, whom he had only once seen, and that at his father's funeral, had on that occasion shown him not the smallest inclination to make his acquaintance. Would it not appear as if, on the first rumour or suspicion of disaster, he had rushed to the spot without decorum, to seize on his uncle's estate, and with no better excuse than a vague telegram received from an irresponsible girl.

'Here is the door,' said the porter. Janet ran up the steps with alacrity and knocked.

Mr. Pennycomequick's house was formal as himself, of red brick without ornament; half-way up the hill, with its back to the road, and without even that mellow charm which old red brick assumes in the country, for this was red begrimed with soot, on which not a lichen or patch of moss would grow. The ugly back was towards the street; the uglier face looked into a garden that ran down the slope to the valley bottom. There were two square-headed windows on one side of the door, two similar windows on the other side, over each an exactly similar window, and over the door one with a round head that doubtless lighted the staircase. Above these was another story similar, but the windows less tall. Who does not know this kind of house? They are scattered in hundreds of thousands over the face of England, and who, with a grain of taste, would not a thousand times rather snuggle into a thatched cottage, with windows broad and low, winking out from under the brown eaves? Not if one lived to the age of the Wandering Jew could one become attached to one of these gaunt, formal, dingy mansions. The door was opened in answer to the bell and knocker, and Philip, after paying the railway porter, requested him to wait five minutes till he ascertained whether he was to spend the night there or go in quest of a bed.

Then he entered the gas-lighted hall, to see his travelling comrade locked in the arms of her sister, a young girl of the same age and height and general appearance, with the same red-gold hair, and the same clear complexion, who was flushed with excitement at meeting Janet.

A pretty sight it was—those lovely twins clinging to each other in an ecstasy of delight, laughing, kissing, fondling each other, with the tears of exuberant pleasure streaming over their cheeks.

But Philip remained unmoved or contemptuous. He saw his Aunt Louisa and Captain Lambert on the stairs.

'I know well what this bit of pantomime means,' thought Philip. 'The girls are showing off before two young men.'

'What! Philip here!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, who hastened down the stairs to greet her nephew. 'Oh, Philip! how good of you to come! I made sure you would the moment you heard the news, and yet I was not sure but that you would shrink from it—as you were on such bad terms with your uncle. I am so glad you have arrived to assist us with your professional advice. This is a sad, a very sad case.'

'Mr. Philip Pennycomequick!' exclaimed Salome disengaging herself from her sister's embrace and standing before the young man. She lifted her great searching eyes to his face and studied it, then dropped them, ashamed at her audacity, and perhaps a little disappointed at what she had seen; for the moment he came towards her he assumed his most uncompromising expression.

'I beg your pardon,' said he stiffly. 'Whom have I the honour——'

'I am Salome Cusworth, who telegraphed to you.'

He bowed haughtily. 'I am glad.'

Then Salome abashed, caught her sister's hand, and said to Mrs. Sidebottom: 'Oh, please, let me take Janet away first—she knows nothing, and you must allow me to break the terrible news to her myself.'

She drew her sister aside, with her arm round her waist, into a room on the ground-floor, where she could tell her privately the great sorrow that had fallen on them.

Philip looked inquiringly after them, and when the door had closed, said to his aunt: 'Who are they? What are they?'

'You may well ask,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'They

are the petted and spoiled daughters of your uncle's housekeeper. He has brought them up beyond their station, and now they will be unfit to do anything when turned adrift.'

'But,' said Philip, 'one is married.'

'Oh yes, of course. She has caught her man. I know nothing of her husband, or how he was tackled. I dare say, however, he is respectable, but only a manufacturer.'

'And the unmarried sister is Salome.'

'Yes, an officious pert piece of goods.'

'Like her sister.'

'Now,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'what are you going to do? In this house you cannot well be accommodated. There are rooms—but everyone's head is turned, servants and all. No toast sent up at breakfast. Your best way will be to go to Lambert's quarters in my house. Here you would be amidst a party of tedious women——'

'I want to be as far as possible from those young ladies,' said Philip. 'One has been in the train with me for many hours, and has worried me beyond endurance.'

'Certainly. Go with Lambert. In my house you will be in Liberty Hall, where you can smoke——'

'I never smoke.'

'And drink whisky and water.'

'I take nothing at night.'

'And talk over social scandals.'

'In which I have not the smallest interest.'

'Well, well, we dine in a quarter of an hour here. You will stay. No dressing, quite *en famille*. Fried soles, a joint and cutlets *à la tomato*.'

'Thank you. I accept; for the inns, I learn, are quite full. I will give orders to the porter to take my traps over to your house, and then, perhaps, you will give me ten minutes to tell me what has happened to my uncle, for I am still in the dark respecting him.'

'So are we all,' said Lambert.

From the room into which Salome had drawn her sister, and which was the sitting-room of their invalided mother, could be heard the sobbing of Janet and the broken accents of the old lady and Salome. There were tears in all their voices.

Then there flashed through the mind of Philip Pennycomequick the thought that, here without in the hall, were the sister and two nephews of the lost man, who had been as yet scarcely alluded to by them, but he had been told about what there was for dinner; whereas, divided from them by a door were three persons unconnected with Uncle Jeremiah, who were moved by his death or disappearance as by that of a dear connection.

Philip, however, said nothing. He turned to the front door to speak to the porter, when a violent ring at the bell called his attention to another man who stood on the steps.

'Beg pardon,' said this man, 'where is Miss Salome?'

'I will call her,' said Philip. 'Who shall I say wants to speak to her?'

'The night-watchman, Fanshawe.'

'Oh, Mr. Fanshawe!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, running through the hall to him, 'has he been found?'

'No such luck,' was the answer.

Philip tapped at the door through which the girls had retreated, and Salome opened it. Her eyes were glittering with tears, and her cheeks were moist.

'There is a fellow called Fanshawe wants a word with you,' said Philip.

The girl advanced through the hall to the door.

'Oh, miss!' said the night-watchman, 'some o' us chaps aren't content to let matters stand as they be. For sewer t'owd gen'lman be somewheer, and we're boun' to mak' anither sarch. We thowt toa'd like to knaw.'

'But—where?'
'I't canal.'
'How?—By night?'
'For sewer. Wi' a loaf o' cake and a can'l.'

CHAPTER X.

WITH A LOAF AND A CANDLE.

WITH a loaf and a candle!

We live in the oldest world, where men labour to do the simplest things in the most roundabout way, and to put whatever they come in contact with to purposes other than those intended. We have seen champagne bottles used as candlesticks, and a bonnet given to a cat to kitten in; and a preacher haranguing in a theatre, and a pugilist occupying a pulpit, women dressing and cutting their hair like men, and men affecting girlish ways; members of Parliament exhibiting themselves as blackguards, and leaders of the people leading them to political suicide, as Jack the Giant-killer made Giant Gruff-me-gruff rip himself open. Those who have feet to walk on, affect standing on their heads, and those who have heads to reason with, think with their stomachs.

With a loaf and a candle!

Astronomers tell us that there are as many suns visible in the firmament as there are human beings in Great Britain—about thirty millions, and that each of these suns is presumably the centre of a system of worlds like our own, and perhaps peopled by beings of like calibre to ourselves. Let us say that each sun is given ten planets, that makes three hundred millions of worlds, having in them the same proportion of thoughtless, unreasoning beings as in this globe with which we are familiar. Who would have supposed that there was such a diffusion of silliness, wrongheadedness, and blunder brains diffused through space.

With a loaf and a candle!

It is the fashion to believe in evolution, to hold that mankind is developed through a long progression from something as inarticulate as frog spawn. And we believe it, because we see so much of this inchoate, inorganic spawn still taking the place of brain in the heads of humanity.

Men have grown and become vertebrate and have branched into members, but the spawn still lingers as it was in the cells of the skull.

With a loaf and a candle!

Full a score of in-the-main not unintelligent men were about to search for the body of their master with a loaf of cake and a candle.* How a loaf and a candle should conduce towards the finding the object they sought, it is not easy to see. What there was in the nature of the loaf or candle to make each appropriate to the purpose, not one of these in-the-main not unintelligent men asked.

The upper reach of the canal had drained itself away, but at the locks the rush of water had furrowed the bed, pent in as it had been between the walls, and had left deep pools. Below the locks the face of the land was flat, the fall slight, and there the canal was brimming, and much of the water that had overflowed still lay about in the fields. This portion of the Keld basin went by the name of the Fleet, which indicated a time, perhaps not remote, when it had been a waste of ooze and water channels, sometimes overflowed and sometimes dry.

The whole of the drained canal bed had been searched between the lock and the bridge that carried the road across the river and canal, a distance of three-quarters of a mile, but without success. The men who intended prosecuting the search in their own fashion were clustered below shattered locks.

* In Yorkshire. cake is white bread; bread is oatcake—Haver-bread.

But the gathering did not consist of men only. With them were some mill-girls from a factory on the slope that had not stopped, not having been affected by the flood. They wore scarlet or pink kerchiefs over their heads, pinned under the chin, and plain white pinafores to protect their dresses at their work from the oil, a custom as picturesque and becoming as convenient. These girls were there, because it was an unsuitable place for them—no other reason will suffice to explain their presence. But women, water and wind will penetrate everywhere.

Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome were also on the canal bank. They had no faith in the experiment about to be tried, but each for different reasons thought it expedient to be present. Salome would not be away, so intense was her anxiety about the fate of Uncle Jeremiah, and Mrs. Sidebottom would be there so as not to seem indifferent. Janet, tired from her long journey, and not strong, did not come out; she remained with her mother. Philip and Lambert Pennycomequick were there as a duty; a disagreeable and onerous duty the captain considered it, because it spoiled his dinner.

A loaf and a candle!

A good round loaf of baker's bread had a hole scooped out of it, and into this hole a tallow candle was thrust. The candle was lighted and sent adrift on the water of the canal.

The night was dark, the moon did not rise for another hour or more. All the mills in the valley were dark. Not only had they been brought to a standstill by the flood, but the main of the gas was broken. This was the cause of the eclipse likewise of the lamps on the road. The water had left the cottage of the lock-keeper, and the bodies of the dead man and his wife had been found and laid on the sodden bed. A yellow glimmer shone out of the window, for a candle burnt there, and a fire had been

kindled. An old woman, a relation, driven from her home by the water, was sitting there, trying to coax a fire to keep in, in the wet and rusty grate, and supplying herself with gin to keep out the chill from her bones.

The town on the hill flank twinkled with lights, and just beyond the ridge pulsated the auroral flicker from the distant foundries. The lamps on the railway shone green and red. Some of those engaged in the search bore lanterns.

The cluster on the embankment with the moving lights, the occasional flash over a red kerchief or a white pinafore and the reflections in the water, united to form a striking picture.

'Si' there,' said one man, 'T'leet' (light) 'be headin' agin t' stream.'

'There's no stream flowing,' said another.

'There owt ta be, and there is for sewer. T'can'l be gan'in up t' course.'

'Because t' wind be blawing frae t' east.'

It was true; the loaf of bread which had been placed in the water, instead of taking a seaward direction with the natural fall of the current, was swimming slowly but perceptibly upwards. The yellow flame of the candle was turned towards the locks, showing in which direction the wind set, and explaining naturally the phenomenon. The current was so slight that the wind acting on the loaf had power to overcome it.

'Sho's travellin' upwards,' said the first speaker, 'Sho's boun to seek him aht.'

Into the canal suddenly fell a mass of undermined bank, making a splash and sending the floating light, gyrating and dancing as the wavelets formed. One of the mill-girls, going too near the edge, had trodden on the loosened soil, and nearly fell in herself, provoking a laugh and a reprimand.

'Mind what tha'rt aboot, lass,' shouted one of the men.

'If that falls in I'm none bound to hug thee aht.'

'I can crawl aht wi'out thy hugging, Bill,' answered the girl promptly.

'Eh!' said another, 'Effie, for sewer thou'rt not bawn to be drowned.'

Some byplay went on, a half romp, in the rear, between a young woolcomber and a girl reeler.

'Na then,' shouted the night watch, 'we're none come aht for laikes' (games), 'and if you're gan'ing to remain you must be quiet.'

The incongruity of their behaviour with the gravity of the occasion struck the young people, and they desisted.

What had become of the refuge hut?

Curiously enough, till this moment no one had noticed its disappearance, perhaps because of the completeness with which it had been effaced. No sooner had the stream penetrated to its interior than it had collapsed, and every brick and slate and rafter had been swept away from the platform it had occupied.

The policeman had joined the party, carrying a bull's-eye lantern.

One of the men had provided grappling-irons, always kept near the bridge, because accidents were not uncommon in the canal and the river; drunken men fell in, children in play got pushed over, girls in paroxysms of despair threw themselves in.

The loaf with the light had now got above the spot where the bank had fallen in, and the ripple aided the wind in carrying it within the locks.

'Sho's got an idee!'

'Wheer? I't crust or i't crumb?'

'Sho's makin' reet ahead for t' deepest hoyle (hole) in all t' canal.'

It was so, the loaf had entered within the walls.

Every now and then, on a ripple, the bread leaped and the flame wavered as a banner. The draught

snuffed the glowing wick, and carried some of the red sparks away and extinguished them in the black water.

The searchers now congregated on the paved platform, and looked timorously yet inquisitively into the gulf where lay the pool dark as ink. The candle-flame faintly irradiated the enclosing walls, and painted a streak of fire on the surface of the water.

When thus enclosed, the movements of the loaf were such as to give colour to the superstition, for it careered in circles, then struck across the canal, went back as if disappointed in its quest, ran up the course, and then turned and went down the enclosed space, and finally came forth from between the walls. There it halted a moment, and danced and careened over, and righted itself again, as relaxing from its search, and tossing the flame in a defiant manner, as if it was disgusted with its work and resolved no longer to prosecute the inquiry. But a minute later it came apparently to a better mind, the flame became steadier, it recommenced its gyrations, described a loop, and suddenly became stationary at a spot a little short of half way across the canal.

The strange conduct of the loaf was in reality caused by the currents and revolutions of the water, but as these were unperceived by those who looked on, they became impressed with the conviction that the loaf was really animated by a mysterious occult power that impelled it to fulfil the task allotted to it.

All now stood hushed for full five minutes, almost breathless, none stirring, every eye directed to the light, to see whether it would remain where it was, or recommence its wanderings.

Then the night-watch exclaimed:

'The moon!'

All turned to the east, and saw the orb rise red above a wooded hill. The darkness was at once sensibly relieved.

'Naw then!' shouted Bill; 'in wi't irons, just at place wheer t' can'l stands.'

The grapplers were cast in, and caught immediately in some object near the surface. The men drew at the ropes, and the waters gurgled and were disturbed about the loaf, producing a broad commotion. The loaf leaped, turned over, and the light was extinguished. It had accomplished its task.

'Whatever can't be?' asked one of the men. 'Sho might be a coil (coal) barge sunk i' t' canal. Sho's sae heavy.'

'Stay,' said the night-watch. 'T' water for sewer ain't deep here, nobbut up to t' armpits. Whativer it be, 'tis this at ha' caught and held t' cake. Ah fancy t' top o' t' concarn is just belaw t' surface. If some o' you chaps'll help, I'll get in, and together we'll hug t out.'

Two or three volunteered, and after much wading and splashing a cumbrous article was heaved out of the water, but not by three or four men, for several more, taunted by the mill-lasses, went in to the assistance of the first volunteers.

'Why,' rose in general exclamation, 'sho's a pi-ano!'

This discovery provoked a laugh, in which all shared.

'How iver could a piano ha' got there?' was asked.

'That beats a',' shouted another, 'that t' loaf and can'l shud tell where a piano lay drounded.'

'T' instrument 'ud sarve to produce a necessary accompaniment to some o' thy songs, Joe.'

The moon had risen by this time sufficiently to transform the whole sheet of water into one of light.

The bell of Mergatroyd Church-tower began to toll for evensong. Suddenly the laughter, the jokes, the exclamations of wonder died away—for something was seen that had risen from the depths, disturbed by

the commotion of the water and mud when the piano was extracted. And see! the loaf with its extinguished candle was swimming towards the object. It reached it; it capered about it; it ran round it; and then attached itself to it.

'What was it?'

The glassy, silvery surface of the water was broken by it in several places.

Then there rushed by along the line a train, with the engine shrieking and shrieking continuously to give warning to workers on the embankment that it was coming. And that shriek so wrought on the nerves of some of the girls present that they screamed also in sudden terror, for, though no one answered the question what that blot on the canal surface was, everyone knew.

All stood motionless again, and waiting till the scream of the train was lost, and then, in silence, two men waded into the water, reached the object, drew it after them to the bank, and with the assistance of others raised it and laid it on the towpath.

Then the group drew towards it, after a momentary hesitation and recoil, and the policeman passed the ray of his bull's-eye lantern up and down it.

The question could no longer be asked, 'What was it?'

It must now be put, 'Who is it?'

Yes—who? For the body just recovered was defaced almost past recognition.

'Whoever he may be,' said the policeman, 'we must find out by his cloas, for his face and head be that mashed and mutilated—'tis a pictur'. For cartain the piano must ha' fallen on him, that is, on his head, and left not a feature to recognise.'

'And the clothing is queer,' observed the night-watch.

It was so. The body recovered was partially naked, with bare legs and feet, and wore nothing more than a nightshirt and a great-coat.

'Stand back,' ordered the policeman. 'Let Miss Cusworth come for'ard.'

And he stooped and spread his hankerchief over the face. There was no need for her to see that.

Salome stepped forward. She was shuddering, but spoke with composure, and not till she had thoroughly studied the corpse at her feet.

'This cannot be Mr. Pennycomequick,' she said; 'he was dressed in a black suit. He had been out to dinner.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, who had pushed forward; 'he was not dressed. I went into the bedroom as soon as I knew he was lost, and found that his dress-clothes were there and the bed disturbed.'

The policeman, kneeling, examined the pockets. From that in the breast of the overcoat he drew forth a card-case, and held it close to the lantern.

Salome said immediately:

'That is Mr. Pennycomequick's card-case.'

'And his cards are in it,' added the policeman.

Salome looked again attentively at the body.

'That is Mr. Pennycomequick's overcoat. I know it—but that cannot be Mr. Pennycomequick wearing it.'

Then, overcome with the horror of the scene, Salome shrank back.

The policeman had now extracted a letter from the pocket; the address was blotted, but after a little examination could be made out, 'J. Pennycomequick, Esq., manufacturer, Mergatroyd.'

'It is strange that he should be without his boots,' said the policeman.

'Not at all,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Anyone but a fool, as soon as he is in the water, kicks them off, as they fill and drag him down. I can swear to the identity—that is my brother. Remove the body to the house.'

CHAPTER XI.

EXPECTATION.

As Philip Pennycomequick came next day to the house of mourning—mourning, because three dressmakers were engaged in making it—he saw that all the blinds were down. In the hall he met Salome, who was there, evidently awaiting him. She looked ill and anxious, and her eyes were bright with a feverish lustre. She had not slept for two nights.

The extraordinary delicacy of her complexion gave her a look as of the finest porcelain, a transparency through which her doubting, disturbed and eager spirit was visible. Her pallor contrasted startlingly at this time with the gorgeous tone of her luxuriant hair. Her eyes were large, the irises distended as though touched with belladonna, and Philip felt his mistrust fall away from off him, as in some fairy tale the armour of a knight loosens itself, drops, and leaves him unharnessed before an enchantress. But the enchantment which dissolved his panoply of suspicion was an innocent one, it was the manifestation of real suffering. He could see that the girl was rendered almost ill by the mental distress caused by the loss of her friend and guardian. That she had loved him, and loved him with an innocent, unselfish affection, seemed to him undoubted.

'I beg your pardon for waylaying you, Mr. Pennycomequick,' she said, in a timid voice; one white hand lifted, with an uncertain shake in it, touching her lips. 'But I very much desire to have a word with you in private before you go upstairs to Mrs. Sidebottom.'

'I'm at your service.'

She led the way into the breakfast-room, recently cleared of the meal. She went to the window, and stood between the glass and the curtain, with her left

hand entangled among the cords of the Venetian blind. In her nervousness it was necessary for her to take hold of something. Her delicate fingers ran up the green strings and played with them, as though they were the strings of a harp on which she was practising, and, strangely enough, Philip felt within him every touch; when she twanged a cord, some fibre in him quivered responsive, and was only lulled when she clasped the string and stopped its vibration.

A faint tinge rose in her white face to the cheek-bones and temples, touching them with more than colour, an apparent inner light, like the Alpine glow after sundown on the white head of the Jungfrau. As she spoke she did not look at Philip, but with eyes modestly lowered on the ground, or out of the window looking sideways down the street.

'What I wished to say to you, Mr. Pennycomequick, will soon be said. I shall not detain you long. I am sorry to differ from Mrs. Sidebottom, but I cannot share her conviction that the body found last night is that of your uncle.'

'You do not dispute that he is dead?'

'No,' she sighed; 'I think there can be no question about that.'

'Or that he was last seen on the canal bank at no great distance from where the discovery was made?'

'No,' she said, and her fingers unconsciously played on the blind cords the time of the melody in Chopin's 'Marche Funèbre.'

'Why do you say no?'

'Mr. Pennycomequick was full dressed when he went out—that is to say, he had on his great-coat and his boots and—in fact it was not possible that he could be discovered in the condition in which the body recovered from the canal was found.'

'It is, of course, difficult to account for it, but not impossible. My aunt declares that she went up to the bedroom of my uncle the same night, found the bed

disturbed, and the dress clothes, or some of them, on the chair. She concludes that he pulled on his overcoat and went out half-dressed, that he got caught by the water somewhere in some place of temporary refuge, and saw that his only chance of escape was to strip and swim. That he drew on his great coat again as a protection against the cold, till the proper moment came for him to make the plunge—but she concludes that he never did start to swim, either his courage failed him, or the flood rose too rapidly and carried him away before he had removed the overcoat. This may be an over-ingenious explanation, nevertheless it *is* an explanation that accounts for all.'

'Not for all—the body is not that of Mr. Pennycomequick.' Salome spoke decidedly, and as she spoke her hand gripped the strings hard.

Philip stood by the table, resting his hand on it. The morning light fell strong on her face, and illumined her auburn hair. Philip took occasion to examine her countenance more closely than had been possible before. She was like her sister in build, in feature and in tone of colour, indeed strikingly like her, but in that only—certainly, Philip thought, in that only.

All at once she looked up and met Philip's eyes.

'No—a thousand times no,' she said. 'That is not uncle. He was brought here because Mrs. Sidebottom desired it, and is convinced of the identity. No objection that I can raise disturbs her. I thought that possibly, last night, I might have judged on insufficient evidence, and so I went this morning into the room to look at the corpse. Mrs. Sidebottom had sent last night for women who attended to it, and it was laid out in the spare room.' She began to tremble now as she spoke, and her fingers played a rapid movement on the blind cords. 'I had made up my mind to look at him, and I did.'

She paused, to recover the control that was fast deserting her, as the delicate glow of colour in her

face had now left it. 'It is not my uncle. I looked at his hands. The head is—is not to be seen, nothing is distinguishable there—but the hands are not those of Mr. Pennycomequick.'

'In what does the difference consist?'

'I cannot describe it. I knew his hands well. He often let me take them in mine when I sat on the stool at his feet by the fire, and I have kissed them.' The clear tears rose in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. 'I am quite sure—if those had been his dear hands that I saw on the bed this morning, I would have kissed them again, but I could not.' She shook her head, and shook away the drops from her cheeks. 'No—I could not.'

'Miss Cusworth,' said Philip, 'you are perhaps unaware of the great alteration that is produced by immersion for many hours.'

'They are not his hands. That is not uncle.'

She was so conspicuously sincere, so sincerely distressed, that Philip relaxed his cold manner towards her, and said in a gentle tone:

'Did my uncle wear a *ring*? There was none on the hands of the man found yesterday.'

'No; he wore no *ring*.'

'With what did he seal his letters?'

'Oh! he had a brass seal with his initials on it, with a handle, that was in his pen-tray. He used to joke about it, and say he was a J.P. without the Queen's commission.'

'For my own part,' said Philip, 'I am beyond forming an opinion, as I have seen my uncle but once since I was a boy, and then under circumstances precluding exact observation.'

Salome said nothing to this, but heaved a long breath. Presently Philip said:

'Your mother—has she been taken upstairs?'

'Oh no!' exclaimed Salome, excited as by a fresh terror. 'You do not know my mother. She has

heart complaint, and we have to be most careful not unduly to excite and alarm her. She has suffered much on account of what has taken place; and the shock of seeing——' She shivered. 'It cannot be.'

'And your sister?'

'She turned faint when brought to the door, and I could not persuade her to enter. She has been much tried by the German invasion of France, and her hurried journey.'

'Is there anything further you have to say?'

'No; Mrs. Sidebottom is wrong, that is all.'

Philip withdrew.

The girl had gained in his estimation. There was strength in her such as lacked in her sister. She must have had courage and determination to go by herself into the room where lay the mutilated corpse, and she had formed her own opinion, independently, and held to it with a firmness there was no breaking down.

Philip ascended the stairs thoughtfully. It had seemed to him at the time that his aunt had rushed at identification with undue precipitation; still, she was the sister of Uncle Jeremiah, and therefore better capable than anyone else. Now he was himself uncertain.

When he entered the study where Mrs. Sidebottom was, she saluted him with:

'Well, so you have had your interview with Salome. She has been hanging about the hall all the morning for the purpose of catching you.'

Philip made no reply. Her light tone jarred on his feelings, coming as he did from the presence of a girl full of sadness.

'Has she gained you over to her side?'

'Upon my word, I do not know what to think.'

'Fiddlesticks!' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'she has made eyes at you. Girls with good eyes know how to use them; they are better advocates than their tongues.'

'The difficulty to identification seems to me insuperable.'

'Pshaw! I have no doubt at all. He had been to bed; he went out without his coat and waistcoat. He was last seen on the canal bank, not so very far from the place where the corpse was found. The body is discovered wearing the great-coat. I have told you how I explain that. I suppose Salome has made a point to you that the nightshirt was not that of Uncle Jeremiah? Her mother looked after his linen.'

'No; she said nothing of that.'

'But I identify the shirt.'

'You, aunt?'

'Yes; it is one I gave him.'

'You—gave him? An extraordinary present.'

'Not at all. I was his sister; and I know that an old bachelor's wardrobe would be in a sad state of neglect. I intended to replenish him with linen altogether.'

Philip was greatly surprised. He looked fixedly at his aunt, to make out whether she were speaking seriously. She dashed off, however, at once on another topic.

'That girl,' she said, 'naturally resisted the conclusions at which I have arrived.'

'Why naturally?'

'Oh, you greenhorn! Because if it be established that Jeremiah is dead, out goes the whole Cusworth brood. They have lived here and preyed on him so long that they cannot endure the notion of having to leave, and will fight tooth and nail against the establishment of his decease.'

'Not at all. You misjudge them. They allow that he is dead, but disbelieve in the identity of the corpse found with my uncle who is lost, which is another matter.'

'Out they shall go,' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

'It is painful for them to leave a house where they

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have been happy, and in which the young ladies have grown up from childhood.'

'Other people have to undergo painful experiences,' said his aunt; and again, 'Out they go.'

'Not at once.'

'As soon as the funeral is over.'

'But why act with such precipitation?'

'Because I cannot endure them. Do you remember the story of the Republican judge, when a gentleman contended before him for his paternal acres against a *sans-culotte*, who had appropriated them? "These acres," said the plaintiff, "have belonged to my family for four hundred years." "High time," said the judge, "that they should be transferred to others;" and he gave sentence for the defendant. These Cusworths have been in possession quite long enough. High time that they should budge, and make room for me.'

'But you must consider the feelings of the old lady. You have no excuse for acting peremptorily.'

'I shall inquire what wage she has received, pay her a month, and send her off. That is to say,' added Mrs. Sidebottom on further consideration, 'I will pay her as soon as I have got some of Jeremiah's money out of the bank.'

'And that cannot be touched till his will has been proved.'

'There is no will.'

'How do you know that?'

'I have searched every drawer, closet, and chest. I have looked everywhere. There is no will.'

'It will be at the lawyers'.'

'Jeremiah never had a lawyer. That was one of his fads.'

'Then at the bank.'

'I wrote to the bank the moment I heard of his death. I have received an answer. There is no will at the bank.'

'There is time enough to discuss this later.'

'No, there is not,' said Mrs. Sidebottom peremptorily. 'The factory must not be allowed to come to a stand, and the business to drift away. You have no claim.'

'That remains to be seen. If there be no will, I shall have a claim, and a pretty substantial one.'

'Your father withdrew his share from the concern. I did not. I have my interest in the business, and will see that it be kept up. Where is Lamb?'

'The captain will be here directly. Hush! I hear him in the hall.'

In another minute, Lambert Pennycomequick entered the room, very fresh, well dressed, and pleasant.

'Lamb!' exclaimed his mother, 'there is no will.'

'Then, I suppose,' said the captain, 'we shall have to take out an administration. I don't understand these things myself, but Cousin Philip is here on the spot to manage for us.'

'If there be no will,' explained Philip, 'you, Aunt Louisa, as sole surviving sister of Uncle Jeremiah, will have to act. You will have to take oath that he is dead, and that he died intestate. Then you will be granted administration as next of kin. If I had any doubt about his death, I would enter a *caveat* and prevent the grant; and then the death would have to be proved in solemn form in court. But I have no doubt that my uncle is dead, though I may think it an open matter whether the body in the other room be his.'

'And, if I am granted administration as nearest of kin, all the property comes to me?' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Not so—most certainly.'

'Why not? I am nearest. I alone have a stake in the mill. Yours was withdrawn long ago. I am his sister, you only a half-nephew.'

'For all that, you do not take everything. I have my share.'

'Well, if it must be, we will divide into three. I take a third in addition to what I have by my marriage settlement; Lamb has a third, and you the remainder.'

'Wrong again, aunt. Lambert is out of the running. The estate will be divided between you and me in equal portions.'

'This is monstrous. My Lambert is a nephew every whit as much as you.'

'Yes, but you intervene. Such is the law.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was silent for a moment. Then she said irritably: 'I wish now, heartily, that there had been a will. I know what Jeremiah's intentions were, and I would grieve to my heart's core to have them disregarded. In conscience, I could not act differently from his wishes. If he omitted to make a will, it was because he knew nothing of law, and supposed that everything would devolve to me, his sister. Philip, knowing the rectitude of your principles, I am sure you will decline to touch a penny of your uncle's inheritance. You know very well that he never forgave your father, and that he always regarded his leaving the business as an acquittal of all further obligations towards him.'

'I must put you out of doubt at once,' said Philip. 'I shall most certainly take my share.'

'I do not believe that my brother died without a will. I never will believe it. It will turn up somehow. These old fogies have their odd ways. Perhaps it is at the mill in his office desk. What a world of contrarieties we do live in! Those persons to whom we pin our faith as men of principle are just those who fail us. However, to turn to another matter. I presume that I am in authority here. You have no *caveat* to offer against that?'

'None at all.'

'Then out go the Cusworths, and at once.'

'Not at once. That is indecent. If you will have it so, after the funeral give them notice. You must act with humanity.'

'The girl is insolent. She has the temerity to dispute my assertion that the dead man is Jeremiah.'

'She is justified in forming her own opinion and expressing it.'

'Of course, you take her part. She has been ogling you with good effect. Lamb, will you go down and call her up? I must have a word with her at once, and ascertain the amount of wages her mother has received, and how much is due.'

'Remember,' said Philip, 'that Mrs. Baynes has come here from Normandy, and that Mrs. Cusworth is ill, and that houses are scarce at present in Mergatroyd.'

'Then let them go elsewhere. To Jericho, for all I care.'

Philip was very angry. He was offended at his aunt's insinuations about himself, and indignant at her want of feeling towards those who had been companions and friends to his uncle.

Lambert had left the room as desired.

'Aunt Louisa,' said Philip, 'I insist upon your acting with courtesy and consideration towards the Cusworths. I do not mean to threaten you; but I shall not tolerate conduct that appears to me as ill-judged as unjust. As you said yourself, we must remember and act upon the wishes of the deceased; and it would be contrary to them that the old lady and her daughters should be treated with disrespect and unkindness.'

'You leave me to deal with them,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, somewhat cowed by his manner.

'You know my opinion. You will find it not to your advantage to disregard it,' said Philip haughtily.

Mrs. Sidebottom shuffled her feet, and arranged her

skirts, frowned, and examined her pocket-handkerchief, where she discovered an iron-mould.

Then Lambert reappeared with Salome, and as they entered the door, Philip turned towards it and took up his position near the girl, facing her aunt, as if to protect Salome from insolence and injustice. Mrs. Sidebottom understood the signification of the movement, bit her lips, and said with constraint, looking on the ground: 'May I ask you, Miss Cusworth, to favour us by taking a chair? There is no occasion for you to stand in my presence. I have taken the liberty to send for you, because my poor dear brother is dead, and as no reasonable doubt remains in any unprejudiced mind that his body has been found——'

Salome's lips closed. She looked at Philip, but said nothing. She had made her protest. One on this occasion would be superfluous.

'We desire in every way to act according to the wishes of my darling brother, whom it has pleased a beneficent Providence'—she wiped her eyes—'to remove from this vale of tears. As his sister, knowing his inmost thoughts, the disposition of his most sacred wishes, his only confidant in the close of life, I may say I know what his intentions were as well as if he had left a will.'

'There is a will,' said Salome quietly.

'A will!—Where?'

'In my workbox.'

A silence ensued. Mrs. Sidebottom looked very blank.

'On the very night he died he gave it me to keep, and I put it away in my workbox, as I had nothing else that locked up. My workbox is in my room upstairs. Shall I fetch the will?'

'No,' said Philip, 'let it stay where it is till after the funeral.'

CHAPTER XII.

SURPRISES.

WHEN the funeral was over, and the family of Pennycomequick was assembled in the house of the deceased, or assumed to be deceased, manufacturer, Mrs. Sidebottom sent her compliments to Salome, with a request that she would favour her with an interview in the dining-room.

Mrs. Sidebottom was dressed in fresh black satin and crape that became her well, as her hair and face were fair. Of this she was aware, and she took the opportunity of surveying herself in every mirror that she passed. Really in her mourning she looked young again. The black seemed to produce on her much the same effect as the photographer's stipple, wherewith he effaces the wrinkles of the negative. It was as though the life of Pennycomequick were a capital of which, when Jeremiah lost hold, his heirs had taken possession. Not Mrs. Sidebottom only, but also her son seemed to have come in for a bequest of vitality. The captain looked brighter, less languid than he had for long.

Philip's suspicious nature had been displeased by the statement of Salome that the will was in her possession. It appeared to him strange that the old man should have entrusted so important a document to the care of a girl of nineteen or twenty. It roused in his mind that mistrust which had been laid. He asked whether the fact of this consignment did not show that the Cusworth family were deeply interested in the will; whether this taking possession of it were not the conclusion of a conspiracy to get the old man to make a testament altogether in their favour.

He did not, on this occasion, move to meet Salome when she entered the room, but took his position

apart, with arms folded, and face imperturbable, and set hard, as if a frost had congealed it.

Philip was not by any means unconcerned as to the disposition of his uncle's property. He would have been raised above the passions and ambitions of human nature had he been unconcerned, for the disposition was likely to affect materially his whole after-life.

Philip was now aged thirty-four years, and was only a solicitor's clerk. The utmost he could expect, without a windfall, would be when well advanced in years to be taken into the firm of Pinch and Squeeze for his mastery of the details of the business. He would be incapable of purchasing a partnership, as he was wholly without capital. What means his father had possessed had been thrown away, and therewith his prospects.

Philip's only chance of recovering his proper position was through a bequest from the uncle whose will was about to be read.

If Jeremiah had died intestate, he would have come in for a share of the business, and for a good lump sum of money, for it is quite certain that his uncle had saved money. He might then have either purchased a partnership in a good legal house, or carried on the factory, remaining at Mergatroyd.

It was true that he knew nothing of the *technique* of linen weaving, but his training had taught him business habits, and he was confident that in a short time he would be able to master the ramifications of the business. There is a tool sold by ironmongers that contains in the handle, saw, file, gimlet, turn-screw, chisel, bradawl, and punch. The nozzle of the handle is provided with a grip that holds or discharges such of the tools as are required or done with. Thus the instrument can be converted at pleasure into whatever is desired.

A business education makes a man into such a

convertible tool, ready, as required, to be saw, file, turnscrew, or punch. Philip was conscious of his mental flexibility, and confident that if he resolved to make a new departure, he could fit himself to it. The knowledge that he had been without means had not soured him as it had his father, but had hardened him. His profession had conduced, as this profession does in many cases, to foster in him a strong and touchy sense of rectitude. Brought into contact with mankind in its ignoble aspects, seeing its sordidness, selfishness, laxity of principle where self-interest is concerned, he had framed for himself a rigorous code of honour, from which nothing would make him swerve by a hair's-breadth.

In the past he had made no calculation on receiving anything from his uncle, but now that the possibility of his getting something was presented to him, he could not contemplate the decisive moment with equanimity. The tiger that has tasted human blood, ever after disdains the food that previously satisfied its maw; and the young lady who has been through a London season, or only ventured into a first ball, will not afterwards return to the sobriety and monotony of country life. If Philip had been left to plod on at Nottingham without expectations, he would have accommodated himself to his situation with dull resignation; but now that a prospect of independence had been dangled before his eyes, he could not return to his old career without intensified distaste.

Yet he was far from forming great hopes. He knew that Jeremiah had been a vindictive old man, never forgiving his brother a mistake which had cost that brother more suffering than it had Jeremiah. It was more probable that the old manufacturer would leave everything to his sister and her son, with whom he had always maintained unbroken connection, than that he should favour him. Whether Jeremiah liked and trusted his sister and her son, and to what extent

he liked and trusted them, Philip had not the means of judging, that alone could be revealed by the will.

If he should be disappointed, his disappointment would be more grievous to bear than he cared to acknowledge to himself. He was, indeed, angry with himself for feeling any flutter of hope. If he should be disappointed, he would return to Nottingham, to his former routine of life, and spend the rest of it in a subordinate position, destitute of that brightness and ease for which a man of education craves as an atmosphere in which his soul can breathe and expand. He did not desire ease because indolent, but to obtain scope for his faculties to develop in other directions than those to which they were professionally turned; and to polish the other facets of the inner self than those exposed to the daily grindstone. He would like to buy books, to take a holiday on the Continent, to purchase small artistic treasures, to be able to rise out of the contracted circle of petty clerk-life, with all its small prejudices and narrow interests.

For fifteen years he had lived this life that was uncongenial, and unless his uncle's money gave him wings to rise out of it, he must remain in this Stymphalian bog. Consequently it was with a beating heart, and with inward fluctuations of hope and fear, that he awaited the decision; but none of this unrest could be seen in his face, that did not bear in it a sign of expectation.

As Salome entered, Mrs. Sidebottom waved to her to take a seat. The girl, however, with a slight acknowledgment, stepped up to Philip, and extending to him the will, said: 'It was given to me to keep safely, should anything occur. I cannot even now resign it absolutely, as Mr. Pennycomequick told me that I was to keep it and prove it.'

'You prove it!' exclaimed Philip, glancing at her suspiciously.

'You!' cried Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Fiddlesticks! That is to say, impossible.'

'You must remain in the room, Miss Cusworth,' said Philip, 'whilst the will is read, after which we will remit it to your charge.'

'I object to such as are not of the family being present,' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Your objection must be put aside,' answered Philip. 'As Miss Cusworth has been entrusted with the document, and required to prove it, she must remain.'

Mrs. Sidebottom tossed her head.

Philip drew his penknife from his pocket, opened it, and leisurely cut through the top of the envelope, extracted the document, and unfolded it. He glanced at the heading, and then, with lawyer-like instinct, at the end, then, with a sharp look of surprise at Salome, who waited with lowered eyes, he said: 'This is worthless. The signature has been torn away.'

'Torn away!' echoed Mrs. Sidebottom.

Salome looked up in astonishment.

'This is a cancelled will,' said Philip. 'It is of no more value than waste paper. When do you say my uncle entrusted it to you?'

'Shortly before he left the house on the night that he disappeared. I am quite sure he thought it was of importance, from his manner towards me in commending it. He said it was a trust, an important trust.'

'Then,' said Philip, 'there is some mystery behind unsolved.'

'Read it,' urged Mrs. Sidebottom; 'and see if that will clear it up.'

'I will read it, certainly,' said Philip; 'but it is a document entirely devoid of legal force.'

Philip began to run his eye over it before reading aloud.

'Well, upon my word,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'you are inclined to keep us on tenterhooks. The will, if not valid, is still interesting, no doubt.'

'This,' said Philip, in a tone that had harshness in it, 'this is a most extraordinary document. It is in the first place clearly made up from some of those formulas which are found in popular handbooks; for aught I know picked out of "Inquire Within for Everything," or the "Family Save-All." The last portion is also clearly taken from no formula at all, but is the expression of my uncle's peculiar idiosyncrasies.'

'Well, read it, and pass your comments on it later,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, shifting her position in her seat and rearranging her skirts.

Before reading, Philip cast a searching glance at Salome. He now seated himself at the table, and proceeded to read:

'I, Jeremiah Pennycomequick, of Mergatroyd, in the County of York, and the West Riding of said county, manufacturer, being in sound health and in full possession of my faculties, do give, bequeath, and devise all the real and personal estate of which I shall be possessed or entitled at the time of my decease, together with my factory, my house with garden, which are all leasehold for twenty-one years, together with all the appurtenances thereof, unto Salome Cusworth, my adopted daughter, absolutely; chargeable, however, with such sum annually to be paid out of the profits, *pro rata*, to my half-sister, Louisa Sidebottom, as was agreed by her marriage settlement. And I further direct and bequeath to my nephew, Lambert Sidebottom, and to my nephew, Philip Pennycomequick, to each severally an annuity of one hundred pounds, to be paid to the said Lambert Sidebottom and the said Philip Pennycomequick during their respective lives, in half-quarterly payments. And I hereby request my executor to invest a sufficient sum in the purchase of such annuities out of the moneys arising from my personal estate. And I further appoint the aforesaid Salome Cusworth, my adopted

daughter, sole executrix of my will, and revoke all former wills by me at any time heretofore made.

'And whereas I have been during the whole course of my lifetime an enemy to lawsuits, and what little I leave I desire may not be squandered away on the gentlemen of the long robe, for whom all the veneration I have is at a distance, and wishing that there was more justice and less law in the world, I devise that should any legatee trouble my executor by going to law, by commencing any suit of law, in any tribunal whatsoever, the said person be deprived of the benefit of the legacy hereby bequeathed.'*

Philip paused, then added: 'The will is dated about a twelvemonth ago, and is witnessed by Marianne Cusworth, widow, of Mergatroyd, and John Dale, surgeon, of Bridlington.' The silence that had been maintained during the reading continued unbroken for a couple of minutes after it was concluded.

The first to break it was the captain, who said: 'A bad job for me. I lose my hundred a year, and am left as before, dependent on my mother's apron-string.'

Philip looked at Salome; she saw by the contraction of the irises of his eyes that there was aversion in his heart.

'Miss Cusworth,' he said in metallic tones, 'there is but one explanation of this extraordinary matter; this explanation that presents itself to my mind is not to your credit. Shall I say what I think, or shall I forbear?'

'Tell me what your opinion is,' she said quietly.

'This will was drawn up, clearly without advice and by his own hand, by my uncle, Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick. What can have induced him to

* The conclusion of this will is taken verbatim from one made by a member of the author's family, and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (Bedford, f. 167).

make such an unjust disposition of his property in your favour you can best tell.'

'I cannot tell. It is unjust. I am glad that the will is worthless.'

'Sour grapes,' muttered Mrs. Sidebottom to her son.

'That undue influence was exercised, I make no doubt. Had this will been perfect, with signature complete, Mrs. Sidebottom, who risks nothing by the outrageous proviso in the second part, would have contested it; this I doubt no more than I doubt that pressure was brought to bear on an old, and perhaps feeble man, to make this will.'

Salome's blood flamed up to the roots of her hair.

'After this will had been made and duly attested, my uncle on thinking the matter over calmly, considered the injustice he had done, and cancelled his signature. He had changed his mind. You, I presume, still exercised pressure on him, and to relieve himself of this, he gave the will into your custody; it was a deception probably justifiable under the circumstances. He unquestionably intended to make another will with quite different provisions, but was prevented by death from executing his intentions.'

'You think,' exclaimed Salome, her bosom heaving and her colour changing rapidly—'you think I could behave so unworthily.'

'I can find no other solution.'

She was cut, wounded to her heart's core.

'You say that the will was given you to keep. For what reason? Because it interested you extraordinarily?'

'Yes,' said Salome, 'so Mr. Pennycomequick said when he gave it me.'

'But why did he think it necessary to give it you when he knew it was invalid? He must have done it to quiet your importunities. I can see no other reason.'

'You wrong me,' said the girl, with pain and dignity. 'I am sure that he did not know it was worthless when he handed it to me. His manner was so serious.'

'You do not suppose it was tampered with after it came into your possession?'

'Oh no, certainly not. It was locked up in my workbox under the tray where are my cottons and needles.'

Mr. Sidebottom watched their faces and followed the dialogue with almost breathless attention. Now she smiled sarcastically.

'It is disappointing,' she said, 'after the toils have been laid to lose the game.'

Salome again crimsoned.

'You think that I used my position in this house, took advantage of my nearness to Mr. Pennycome-quick, to induce him to commit an injustice?'

Philip bowed stiffly.

'You charge me with the grossest breach of honour, with wicked ingratitude to the man who has been to me as a father?'

'We do not accuse you personally,' said Lambert, who thought that, as he would have expressed it, his cousin and mother were 'down on the girl too hard,' 'but we think it awfully queer that uncle should have made such a will. Your mother, for instance——'

'My mother is as incapable of such meanness as myself,' said Salome. 'To such as can think of me so basely, no justification I could make would be of any avail. With your leave——'

She bowed, and now white as ivory, with spots of fire in her temples, she swept out of the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT NEXT?

WHAT was to be done?

Mrs. Sidebottom was the first to see what was to be done.

'I shall take out an administration at once,' she said.

Philip said nothing. Of course she must do what she said. She was the proper person to take out an administration as nearest of kin. But he was not thinking of her and of what she proposed to do. He was standing still with the will in his hand. Salome had not reclaimed it, as it was worthless. He proceeded to fold it and replace it in the cover. Philip was not easy in his mind. He had spoken in a rude manner to the girl, throwing a gross charge against her, and had grievously hurt her.

Was the charge just? Was it possible to explain the peculiar circumstances in any other way than that which had occurred to him?

Suddenly looking up at Mrs. Sidebottom, and then at the captain, he looked down again, and this time with great attention at the envelope.

'The envelope has been tampered with,' he said.

'In what way?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom.

'It has been opened by means of a heated penknife. Here are the marks of the smoke that have been rubbed off the blade upon the paper; and here are cuts made by the knife in the paper. The envelope, after having been sealed, was opened carefully, even cunningly.'

'Why carefully or cunningly I cannot tell, but of course opened it has been,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'You do not suppose Jeremiah could destroy his signature without opening the envelope?'

'Certainly not. But I should not have supposed he would take pains to do it in such a manner. He had plenty of long envelopes at hand. Then, again, to refasten it a different sealing-wax was employed to what had been used before, a slight difference in tint of scarlet, and one impression of the stamp can be traced over the other, the earlier not being wholly obliterated. Excuse me one moment, Aunt Louisa, I should like to have a look at my uncle's study.'

'Philip—the room is in disorder!' said Mrs. Sidebottom, starting to her feet and flushing, 'I cannot, really; upon my word, I will not permit——'

But he had left the room before she could prevent him. She moved to follow him, but reconsidered herself and turned back.

'Fiddlesticks!' she said angrily; 'nothing but fiddlesticks.'

'I am the sufferer,' grumbled Lambert; 'I shall be left in the cold. You and Philip take everything.'

'What I have serves to make you comfortable,' retorted the mother.

'That may be,' answered Lambert, 'but it is one thing to have money of one's own, and another thing to have to come to one's mammy for every penny, and to find that the mammy rarely has any pennies in her purse.'

'Hitherto I have been pinched in circumstances. It will be different now, Lamb, you will see.' After a pause, she added, 'Unless that meddlesome, vexatious prig, Philip, prove an obstruction.

Presently Philip returned.

'It is as I thought,' said he. 'The sealing-wax employed the second time is that now in the pen-tray on my uncle's desk; not only so, but his knife is there also, bearing on it the traces of exposure to fire. It was probably thrust into the flame of the gas to heat it so as to enable it to dissolve the wax off the seal.'

'No doubt about it,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'and

this proves that Jeremiah cancelled his will shortly before his death. I should not be surprised if he did it the same night that he died, immediately before giving it to Salome.'

'The case is a most extraordinary one,' said Philip.

'Not at all; it is clear as day.'

Philip did not care to debate the matter with his aunt, so he left the room, and taking his hat, entered the garden.

The garden, as already said, descended from the house to the valley. It consisted of two slopes, divided by a wall; the upper slope ended in a terrace-walk, with the coping of the wall serving as a parapet to it. Access to the lower garden was obtained by a flight of steps at each end. The upper of the two divisions was devoted to flowers, the lower to vegetables, and fruit-trees were trained against the wall that buttressed up the terrace.

Philip paced the upper terrace for several minutes, and was unable to come to a decision; he could not see that the matter was as simple as his aunt pretended. For, as he argued, why should his uncle have taken pains to preserve the original envelope when there was no apparent necessity for so doing. If anyone else had opened the envelope, then he could understand the care taken to preserve it with its superscription, 'The Last Will and Testament of Jeremiah Pennycomequick,' and to conceal the fact that it had been adroitly unclosed.

But who would have been likely to commit such an act? Certainly not Salome, in whose keeping, under lock and key, the will had been. It was hardly possible that it had been tampered with since it was given to her. Was it possible that it had been cancelled before, unknown to Jeremiah?

Philip saw that he had not the data, or had not data sufficient, on which to come to a decision. He must have another interview with Salome. He therefore

returned to the house, and meeting a servant in the hall, asked her to request Miss Cusworth to speak with him a few minutes in the garden.

Without delay Salome came. She had not put on a bonnet, but had thrown a gray shawl over her head, and pinned it under her chin like a mill-girl. Some of her burnished hair, like autumn oak-leaves flaming in the evening sun, shone out from under the shawl, and the gray wool contrasted pleasantly with the delicately beautiful complexion, now no longer white, but with flying tinges of colour in it, like a sunset sky in which are drifts of vapour, high aloft, undefined, yet sensitive to the rays of the declining orb. She was deeply wounded, and the changes in her colour followed the fluctuations of resentment, humiliation, anger and pain in her heart.

She had been crying—Philip saw that—for though she had wiped her eyes, the tears were still near the surface, and with difficulty restrained from overflowing.

'Miss Cusworth,' said Philip, with stiffness, but an attempt at graciousness, 'I regret that I addressed you a few moments ago without that charity which I was bound to entertain. I was surprised, indignant, and rushed to a conclusion which may prove to have been formed too precipitately. I shall be greatly—very greatly obliged, if you will accept my apology, and allow me to ask you a series of questions on the subject of the will, to enable me to form a matured opinion as to the manner in which it was cancelled, and by whom it was done; two points that appear to me at this moment by no means as clear as they did a quarter of an hour ago, because a close examination of the envelope has shown me that it was opened recently, and in a manner that seems to me suspicious.'

'I will answer any questions you put—as far as it is in my ability to answer them.'

'And—we shall be more at our ease, more in private, if we take the lower walk at the foot of the

wall,' said Philip, 'as from the windows everyone can see us here and comment on our interview. May I ask you to do me the further favour of walking with me below the steps?'

'Certainly,' answered Salome, and began to descend.

Philip would have been devoid of the elementary faculties by which beauty is perceived and admired, if he had not been struck at this time by the young and graceful figure that preceded him, and by the perfect sweetness of the innocent, sad face that turned at the bottom and looked back at him. She did not reproach him with her eyes, and yet, when he caught them, his own eyes fell, and he became uncomfortable and conscious of having wronged her. She puzzled him. Was she tricky, double, self-seeking? or was she what she looked—sincere and straightforward?

A consciousness stole over Philip that had he lived in the same house with her for sixteen or seventeen years, as had Uncle Jeremiah, and had come to make his will, then without her uttering a word of persuasion, he would be leaving her everything he had—just as Jeremiah had at one time done; only he would never have worded his will in such a clumsy, absurd, and unusual fashion. As soon as he reached the foot of the steps, he took his place at her side. Here was a broad walk parallel to that above, facing the sun, sheltered, with the trained trees against the wall on one side, and a box-edging on the other, with, in summer, a border of herbaceous flowers fringing the beds of cabbage, onions, brussels sprouts, and carrots.

'I am at your service,' said Salome.

'Then I will begin my catechism at once,' said Philip. 'Please to give me an exact account of what passed in your last interview with Mr. Pennycomequick.'

'Do you mean actually the last—as he went out for his walk by the canal, or when he gave me the will to keep?'

'I mean the latter.'

'He had been out to dinner. I sat up awaiting him, thinking he might want something before he went to bed. It was most unusual for him to accept invitations to dine out. When he came back——'

"He had been dining with Mrs. Sidebottom, I think?'

'Yes; when he came back it was early—that is to say, earlier than I expected. But he was out of spirits, and told me he left as soon as he could get away for that reason.'

'Had anything occurred to disturb him?'

'Not that I know of. But he certainly was in a more desponding mood than I had seen him in at any time previously.'

'Did he give any reason for it?'

Salome hesitated.

'What reason did he give for his depressed spirits?'

'He did not exactly give a reason for it, but he was a little mistrustful—perhaps of the world in general.'

'And of anyone in particular?'

Salome coloured; her hand caught her shawl below her chin and worked nervously at it.

'I had rather you did not force me to answer that question,' she said timidly.

'Very well,' said Philip, 'only let me observe that this is not answering me with the fulness that was promised.'

'I think he was unjust—and I had rather that little ebullition of injustice was forgotten.'

'Go on,' said Philip. 'Did he give you the will, then?—and was it in anyway in connection with the mistrust he expressed?'

'I cannot say that. He started up, said he would confide to me a most solemn trust, that concerned me nearly, and went out of the room——'

'Whither did he go?'

'To the study, I fancy; and in a moment returned——'

'Excuse me. In a moment?'

'Yes, almost directly, returned with the paper.'

'It was in the envelope?'

'Oh yes, just as I gave it you.'

'You do not think he would have had time to open the envelope, tear off his signature, and reseal the cover before coming back to the room where you were?'

'Oh no! He went upstairs and came down again immediately.'

'Now tell me. Are you quite sure that he believed the will was intact when he gave it you?'

'I am sure of it from his manner.'

'And where did he keep it before he gave it you?'

'I do not know.'

'Had you any previous knowledge of the will and its contents?'

'None whatever. I have not even heard my mother speak of it; and she must have known, because she witnessed it. But I am sure also she had no idea as to its contents, or she would have joined with me in entreating him not to make such an unjust disposition of his property. I am glad the will is worthless, because I never could have felt that I had a right to receive all uncle—I mean Mr. Pennycomequick—left me in that will. I should have felt that I was robbing the relations, and I would have refused to benefit by the will.'

'Who is the John Dale who signed as witness along with your mother?'

'Mr. Dale! Oh, he was a dear friend of Mr. Pennycomequick. He always spent his Christmas here, and uncle went at Whitsuntide to spend a few days with him at Bridlington. Mr. Dale is trustee to Janet. We both like him.'

Salome spoke so openly, so quietly, and with such

self-possession, that again his suspicions began to yield to the charm of her honesty, as they had before.

'One matter further,' said Philip. 'After Mr. Pennycomequick had given you the will, you locked it up in —I remember you said—a workbox.'

'Yes, in my workbox.'

'And the workbox—was that put away anywhere?'

'Oh no. I use it every day.'

'Then—the same box is unlocked very often?'

'Yes.'

'And left unlocked?'

Salome hesitated a moment, then said: 'Yes—but it is in my room. No one would meddle with my things—no one has any interest in my little odds and ends. Besides, no one would be so mean.' Then after a pause, 'Mr. Pennycomequick, you charged me with a piece of baseness which'—she shook her head impatiently, as if to shake off the imputation—'which it is a stain on me to think of as possible. I could not—I would die rather than do what is mean. Mean!' She turned her face suddenly round on him; it was flushed, and the eyes sparkled. 'No, Mr. Pennycomequick, I could be wicked, but not mean—no, not that on any account, under whatever provocation—no, not mean!'

'I beg your pardon, Miss Cusworth, most sincerely. I committed myself to a rash charge, which I withdraw.'

She paid no attention to his apology, but went on: 'No, I would not have taken advantage of the will had it been in form and right; for that would have been mean. Dear Mr. Pennycomequick I loved and love still from the depths of my heart; but he had his faults, and one was that he was not forgiving to his own relations—to you. And he thought harshly of his sister, Mrs. Sidebottom, and despised Captain Pennycomequick. I had no claim on him at all, and if he saw that he had done wrong, and had himself

cancelled the will, no one would rejoice more than myself; for it would show me that he had returned to a more kindly view of you all.'

'But how do you account for the signature being torn off?'

'I have not thought much about it since. I thought only of the hurt you had done me.'

'Is it possible that he can have changed his mind, invalidated his will, and then forgotten that he had done so? No, that is impossible. The act was too recent,' Philip argued aloud.

'I would not have had people think ill of dear old uncle,' said Salome, pursuing her own train of thought, little concerned how the will was invalidated, concerned only with her solicitude for the memory of the deceased. 'He had been unspeakably kind to my mother and my sister and me. Everyone would talk, all would say he had been unjust, supposing that will had stood. Over his grave—that was not he who was buried to-day—his grave, wherever it may be, heart-burnings would have arisen, and reproachful words would have been cast at his memory. He wrote that will in some queer mood when he was not quite himself. He never, I must say it, quite valued Mrs. Sidebottom as a sister, and he was ill-pleased when she left York and settled at Mergatroyd. The captain, he thought, had not much brains and was imprudent about money. You he did not know, and he had a mistaken prejudice against lawyers. But there—how the will was made of no effect; whether by himself or—or how, matters little; the deed is done, and no one can ever say that he wronged his own flesh and blood.'

She had spoken quickly, eagerly, without pause, and with a heightened colour.

A sudden idea came into Philip's mind with a flash.

'You—Miss Cusworth! For the sake of his memory, did you meddle with the will?'

This was a repetition of the charge. First, he charged her with coarse self-seeking, now with blind self-effacement.

'I—I—oh! Mr. Pennycomequick, of course not. It was a trust. I could not touch it, even to save his dear name from reproach.'

'Miss Cusworth,' said Philip, 'have you any objection to my seeing your mother?'

'Not in the least. Only remember she is frail. She suffers from her heart.'

'Will you take me to her at once?'

'Certainly. Follow me.'

She led Philip up the steps, through the upper garden; Philip's eyes, which had watched her descend the steps with admiration, saw her mount them with even greater. She conducted him to the room occupied by her mother as a parlour.

The old lady was in black, and was dusting. That was her daily occupation. She travelled about the house with a duster in her pocket, and when the duster became dirty she took her pocket-handkerchief and dusted with that; and it was also black. She had been an energetic woman in her youth, and now that she suffered from her heart, was impatient at not being allowed to do as much as she had been wont. She had made an excellent housekeeper to Mr. Pennycomequick. When he was short of domestics she turned her hand to anything—cooked, did housework, needlework—would have cleaned the knives and boots if the boy had failed. The deficiency in servants was not an extraordinary event. In a manufacturing district few girls care to enter domestic service and submit to its restraints, when they can earn their livelihood at the mills, and have the evenings to themselves in which to meet their friends. When Mr. Pennycomequick's establishment was complete, she spent her day in making up for the deficiencies of the domestics—putting straight what they had crooked, cleaning

out corners they had neglected, brushing down cobwebs they had overlooked, detecting breakages they had made, and repairing rents they had effected in household linen. She was not a good-looking woman, but the likeness of the two girls to her was traceable; moreover, she must have had at one time auburn hair, for though her hair was much darker now, it had in it glints of red copper. Her heart-complaint had given to her face a waxy, even greenish tint, and her lips were leaden.

On being introduced to her, Philip felt somewhat ashamed of not having made her acquaintance before, because he had allowed himself to be influenced by Mrs. Sidebottom's prejudice. His aunt had treated the widow with studied indifference, and when noticing her, behaved towards her with superciliousness. Mrs. Cusworth had accordingly kept very much to herself in the rooms allotted to her use.

Janet was fired with indignation at the discourtesy shown to her mother; she wished to defy Mrs. Sidebottom, but her mother bade her remember that now this lady was in authority, and that she and her daughters remained in the house upon sufferance only.

Philip bowed on entering, and apologized somewhat lamely for not having made the lady's acquaintance earlier, and then, turning, saw Salome glide out of the room with her arm in that of her sister. The girl rightly understood that Philip desired to speak with Mrs. Cusworth alone. He proceeded at once to cross-question her on the subject of the will.

'You must excuse me,' he said, 'but I am forced to make inquiries. I presume you have been told that a very advantageous will, made in favour of your daughter, has been found, cancelled, and no subsequently drawn will has been discovered. Mr. Pennycomequick gave this valueless one to Miss Cusworth to keep, and I cannot doubt he did so believing he

entrusted her with one that was valid. Now, either he took this one by mistake for a subsequent will which has disappeared, or the will has been—no, I will not commit myself to the statement of the alternative. Be so good as to tell me what you recollect about the signing of the will?'

'It was done just after Janet's wedding.'

'Were you aware of the contents?'

'Certainly not. Mr. Pennycomequick sent for me to his study, where he was with Dr. Dale. He merely asked me to witness his signature to his will; but he entered into no particulars.'

'You had no reason to believe he intended to constitute Miss Cusworth his heiress?'

'Not the least. I supposed he would leave her something as he had dealt so liberally by my other daughter at her marriage; I neither wished for nor expected more; certainly for nothing which might cause annoyance to the family.'

'He never alluded to his intention?'

'Never. He was a reserved man.'

'And you have no reason to suppose he made another will subsequent to that?'

'I know nothing. I was not called in to witness another.'

'Thank you,' said Philip, rising. 'The mystery is to me as dark now as before, only'—and this he said to himself—'the one explanation I gave at first is, I am now convinced, certainly the wrong one.'

CHAPTER XIV.

ADMINISTRATION.

PHILIP PENNYCOMEQUICK returned to the garden. He was still greatly perplexed, but a new and disquieting suspicion had invaded his mind. He was

now completely satisfied that no undue influence had been used to force the old man to make his extraordinary will. He was also tolerably certain that he handed it to Salome in good faith, believing it to be untouched. The will had been tampered with, either just before or after his death. It was hardly possible that this could have been done before, when preserved, as he little doubted, in the iron chest in which Jeremiah kept all his deeds and papers of value. It was more probable that the mutilation had been effected afterwards, when carelessly kept in Salome's workbox, which probably had a lock easily fitted with a key, and which was sometimes incautiously left unlocked when Salome was not in her room.

But who would be likely to do such an act, commit a felony? He dared not accuse his aunt; even in thought, such an accusation was too terrible. He had no confidence in her rectitude. His mistrust of her truthfulness had been deepened by her audacious assertion that Jeremiah had worn a nightshirt she had given him, a statement which he was convinced was untrue, and one made by her to get over the difficulty about the linen of the drowned man differing from that known to have belonged to her brother.

He could not disguise from himself that, on the supposition that Mrs. Sidebottom had mutilated the will, all the difficulty in explaining the mystery disappeared. She had heard from Salome where the will was—in her desk and in her room. It was to Mrs. Sidebottom's interest to know its contents, and to invalidate it when she did know them. But Philip, though he held his aunt in low esteem, could hardly think she could be guilty of such wickedness. But how else explain the difficulty. Then, again, supposing he reached moral conviction that she had tampered with the document, what course could he pursue? He had absolutely no evidence to justify a public accusation, and without very strong and con-

clusive evidence he could not make such a charge—a charge of felony against his own aunt.

When he considered the grounds on which his suspicion rested, he found how slight they were. The facts were that Mrs. Sidebottom knew where the will was, that she was in the house, and had opportunities of obtaining access to the will, and that it was to her interest to destroy its force. He had no reason to think his aunt morally capable of such a crime. His belief in her veracity was shaken, but it is a long way between telling a lie and committing a crime such as that he was half-inclined to attribute to her.

With his mind still unsatisfied he went to the study, where he knew he would find her. Captain Lambert had gone out. The captain had borne the restraint imposed on him by the death of his uncle with impatience. He had been prevented from playing his usual game of billiards. He had yawned in the morning and stood at the window with his hands in his pockets, then had shifted his position to the fire, and stood before that with his hands behind him, and found neither position to his taste. In the afternoon he had lounged between the two houses, and had sauntered in the garden, and grumbled and yawned continually. In the evening, when alone after dinner, in his frogged smoking-jacket and slippers, lounging in an arm-chair, he read a little, and when Philip was there, talked with him. But nothing satisfied him; the *Field* he found 'awfully dull!' his cousin 'awfully prosy!' and he pronounced as his criticism of every novel he dipped into that it was 'awful trash!'

Philip and Lambert had no interests in common, because Lambert had no interests at all. Philip was reserved, Lambert open, with the difference that exists between a purse and a glove. Philip had much in him which was not for all the world; Lambert had nothing in him whatever.

Lambert was easy-going, selfish and good-natured

in what did not touch his own comfort and ease. He had little conversation, and what he had was uninteresting. We come across people continually who have to be dredged that anything may be got out of them, and when dredged, yield nothing to compensate the labour of dredging. In some rivers it is worth while to try the depths with rakes and grapples, or even by diving, for on examination they yield gold-dust, diamonds and pearls. But out of others nothing is extracted save pots, weeds, the waste matter and sewage of civilization. When Lambert was dredged he gave up worthless stuff, scraps of stale news, old jokes worn to pieces, venerable conundrums that had lost their point, and familiar anecdotes retailed without salt. Undredged, he yielded nothing, except among those of his own mental calibre, and with them he talked about people he had met, houses at which he had visited, wines that he had drunk, game that he had shot, the relationships of his acquaintance, about jolly fellows, nice girls, good cigars, and scrumptious dinners. He was a harmless, lazy man who would not wilfully do what was wrong, and would never exert himself to do what was right.

There are tens of thousands of these negative beings about, male and female, useful in their way, as nitrogen is of use in the atmosphere, void of quality itself, but diluting the active oxygen ; as certain ingredients are serviceable as fluxes to valuable metals, but have no other known use in creation.

Lambert's mother had energy for both, and managed for herself and for him. He was well content that it should be so, it saved him trouble. He left her to decide everything for him, as he left his clothes to be brushed and folded and put away by the servant. And as he was a man without a pursuit, he voted everything he had to do a bore, and was voted by everyone who knew him the worst of bores.

'Well, Philip,' said Mrs. Sidebottom cheerily as her

nephew entered ; she was engaged in looking through a list of designs for mourning dresses. 'Well, Philip, I am knocked to pieces with the strain, and am glad all is over. I hope you have had a satisfactory interview with that girl, brought her to a humble frame of mind, and induced her to confess that she and her mother concocted that abominable will ?'

'On the contrary,' answered Philip gravely, 'I am satisfied from what she and Mrs. Cusworth have told me that they had nothing to do with it. Not only was no undue pressure brought to bear on my uncle, but they were completely ignorant of the contents of his testament.'

'Fiddle-faddle,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I don't give them credit for being such fools. They had Jeremiah in their hands for many years. He made that will in their favour, at their suggestion ; only when I came here did his conscience speak out, and then he cancelled it. The case is as plain as a pikestaff.'

'You wrong her—her mother,' said Philip with some heat.

'You—yourself,' retorted Mrs. Sidebottom, 'accused her of having employed unfair means to procure the will. I am only repeating what you said.'

'I did so. I was hasty. I now regard both Mrs. and Miss Cusworth as incapable of such conduct.'

'Why !—what a weather-cock you are ! You men are easily talked round by women. A cow has horns, a horse has hoofs, and a dog teeth, for self-protection ; but a woman has only her tongue, which she can use skilfully—far more skilfully than the brutes use their weapons. Why, Philip, there are insects that accommodate themselves in colour and appearance to the ground they are on, or the tree or leaf they are destroying, so as to escape detection ; and you would have this precious Salome less clever than an insect ? She has assumed the colour necessary for imposing on your eyes.'

Philip winced. He had changed his mind twice with respect to Salome, and both times in consequence of an interview with her.

'I have a proposal to make,' he said; 'but before making it, I must lay the case before you plainly.'

'I desire nothing better, but I wish Lamb were here also.'

'I wish first to discuss it with you alone, after that we can take Lambert into conference.'

'I am all attention.'

'In the first place, I take it that my uncle made the will without having been subject to any direct pressure. Indirect there was, but that was also unconscious. The children had grown up in his house, he had become warmly attached to them, and when one was married, he provided for her.'

'Most unbecomingly and unnecessarily.'

'He did as he thought fit. The money was his own—his savings; and he had a perfect right to dispose of it as he considered proper. In full possession of his faculties, more than a twelvemonth ago, he made a marriage settlement of a large sum on one of the young ladies, and then, as she was provided for, he made his will, providing for the sister. Miss Salome had been as a daughter to him, he loved her not less than he did Miss Janet, and certainly had no intention that she should be left destitute when he was removed.'

'I grant you all that,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'He might have left her an annuity of fifty or a hundred pounds. That would have sufficed. But why leave her everything? But there—what is the good of discussing a document which is of no legal force?'

'Allow me to proceed. Whether he acted rightly or wrongly is a question I will not enter into. What he did was what he had proposed in his heart to do, to provide for Miss Salome, and to leave to Lambert and me only small annuities. He did not bequeath the

factory to Lambert, whom he very well knew was not calculated to manage a business, and he did not leave it to me, because he knew nothing about my capabilities and character. I think it is by no means improbable that there is something else behind. Miss Cusworth may be engaged to a suitable person, whom Uncle Jeremiah approved as one likely to carry on the business and not throw it away. I conceive that the will may have been prompted quite as much by concern for an old-established and respected business as by regard for the young girl. He may have calculated on the marriage, but not have cared to allude to it at an early stage of the engagement. This is merely a conjecture of mine, and I have no knowledge of anything to substantiate it. You must take it for what it is worth.'

'Oh, that is likely enough; but as the will is cancelled, why harp upon it?'

'Such I imagine was the mind of my uncle when he framed that will. In two words, he desired that the firm should be carried on, and that his adopted daughter should be provided for.'

'I allow all that.'

'Now the will has been invalidated in a mysterious manner by the signature being torn away. By whom that was done is not known to us, but I do not allow it is at all conclusive that Uncle Jeremiah did it himself.'

'Of course he did it. He did it because I was in Mergatroyd, and he had come to value me. Besides, Lambert had changed his name; he had ceased to be a Sidebottom, and had become a Pennycomequick. Indeed, he said as much to me. He was mightily pleased at the change. It was a compliment he took to heart.'

Philip frowned. His aunt had recollections of things said and done that came in very conveniently to support her theories.

'My impression is,' said Philip, 'that the will was not torn by my uncle, but by someone else.'

'And pray,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, tossing her head and moving uneasily in her seat, 'do you suspect anyone?'

'I accuse no one,' he said drily; 'I have no right without evidence to do so.'

'Good gracious me!' laughed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'What an imagination you are endowed with, Philip! First it leads you to scheme out the whole story of the concoction and destruction of the will, and this you pour out on Salome Cusworth; then you withdraw the charge, and you conceive a probable engagement between this young minx and an Admirable Crichton, who is to manage the mill and carry on the business; and now you have an idea of some outrageous fraud having been committed. Save us from such vagaries of the fancy!'

'As it was my uncle's intention that Miss Cusworth should be left comfortably off, and as—by whatever means his will has been mutilated—she is now left wholly unprovided for, which is most certainly against his wish, I propose to you that we, who become the heirs, should do something to assure to Miss Cusworth a provision at least equal in amount to that made for her sister.'

'I—I do not understand.'

'What I say is plain enough. We who share the property of my uncle must deduct from our shares in equal proportions such sum as will, when invested, bring in for the sole benefit of Miss Cusworth the modest sum of a hundred and fifty pounds per annum.'

'A hundred and fifty fiddlesticks!' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I'll be hanged before I agree to that!'

'To what extent, then, do you propose to meet my suggestion?'

'Not at all. I will not consent to give her a farthing!'

'You decline to carry out the wishes of your brother?'

'I dispute that they were his wishes—at one time maybe, before I arrived at Mergatroyd. After that he changed his mind altogether, and in evidence—he cancelled his will.'

'I am by no means prepared to allow that that was his doing.'

'A hundred and fifty pounds! Why, at four per cent. that would be nearly four thousand pounds. I would rather throw my money into the sea, or give it to a hospital.'

'I repeat, it was the purpose of the testator to provide for Miss Cusworth. He had not altered his purpose on the night that he died, for he handed her the will to keep in such a manner——'

'According to her own account,' interjected Mrs. Sidebottom.

'As showed that he believed the will was untouched. Either before that, or after—I cannot say when or by whom—the act had been committed which destroyed the value of the will. But Uncle Jeremiah to the last intended that the young lady should be provided for.'

'I will consent to nothing.'

'Very well,' said Philip, 'as you cannot agree to my proposal, no other course is left me than to enter a *caveat* against your taking out an administration.'

'What good would that do?'

'It will do no good to anyone—to you least of all; I shall state my grounds before the Court—that I believe the will of my uncle, which I shall present, has been fraudulently dealt with by some person or persons unknown, and I shall endeavour to get it recognised, although it lacks his signature.'

'What!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, turning all colours of mottled soap. 'Throw away your chance of getting half!'

'Yes—because I will not be unjust.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was silent. She was considering. Her fidgets showed that she was alarmed.

'You will be able to effect nothing,' she said. 'The Court would say that Jeremiah acted improperly when he left his property away from his family, and that he did right in cancelling the will.'

'Anyhow, I shall contest the grant of letters of administration.'

'What a chivalrous knight that girl has found in you!' sneered Mrs. Sidebottom. 'You had better throw yourself at her feet altogether.'

Philip made no answer.

Mrs Sidebottom fished up an antimacassar that had been on the back of her chair but had fallen from it, and had been worked into a rope by her movements in the chair. She pulled it out from under her, and threw it on the floor.

'I detest these things,' she said. 'They are shoppy and vulgar. Only third-rate people, such as Cusworths, would hang them about on sofas and arm-chairs.'

Philip remained unmoved. He knew she was taking about antimacassars merely to gain time.

Presently he said, 'I await your answer.'

Mrs. Sidebottom looked furtively at him. She was irritated at his composure.

'Very well—as you like,' she said, with a toss of her head; 'but I did not expect this inhuman and unreasonable conduct in you, Philip.'

'I take you at your word. That is settled between us. Now let us turn to another consideration. The mill must not be stopped, the business must be carried on. I do not suppose that Lambert cares to enter into commercial life.'

'Certainly not.'

'Or that you particularly relish life in Mergatroyd.'

'I hate the place.'

'I am quite willing to undertake the management

of the factory, at first provisionally, till some arrangement has been come to between us. As soon as the administration is granted, we shall consider the division of the estate, and deduct equally from our several shares that portion which we have resolved to offer to Miss Cusworth.'

'As you please,' said Mrs. Sidebottom sulkily. 'But you treat me abominably. However—now, I suppose, unopposed by you—I can ask for right to administer?'

'Yes—on the conditions to which you have agreed.'

'Wait—this house is mine, I suppose. Then I will clear it of those who are odious to me.'

She started from her seat and left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WOMAN WITH A PIPE.

WHAT had become in the meantime of Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick, over whose leavings such a dispute was being waged? We left him clinging to the head of a Lombardy poplar that was being swept down the valley of the Keld by the flood.

The head of a poplar was by no means the most agreeable sort of vessel in which to shoot the rapids of Fleet Lock and navigate the lower Keld-dale. In the first place it allowed the wash of the descending current to overflow it, and in the next it had no proper balance, and was disposed to revolve like a turbine in the stream. This latter propensity was presently counteracted by the branches catching and entangling about some ponderous matter in the bed, perhaps a chain from the locks. It was not possible for Mr. Pennycomequick to keep dry. He was like Moses in the cradle of bulrushes, from which the pitch calking had been omitted. He was completely drenched,

because submerged except his head and shoulders, chilled, numb, and giddy.

The tree made a plunge over the lock edge, where the stream formed a cataract, carried him under water, and came up again with him still among the branches. He had seen the hut crumble into the stream before he made his dive. When the water cleared out of his eyes, and he looked again, he could see it no more.

He threw himself on his back, with his arms interlaced among the pliant boughs, and his face towards the night sky. He saw the clouds like curd, and the moon glaring pitilessly down on him in his distress, showing him a wide field of water on all sides and help nowhere. He was too cold to cry out; he knew that it would be useless to do so. Succour was out of reach. Lying cradled among the branches, elastic as those of willow, he was fast as in a net; bedded among the twigs, he might let go his hold and would be carried on. He looked up steadily at the moon, and wondered how long it would be before his eyes stiffened and he saw the things of creation no longer. He could distinguish the shadows in the moon and make out the darkened portion of the disc. How cold and cheerless it must be yonder! A life of numbness and lack of volition and impulse must be the lot of the Selenites! Fear of death, anxiety for himself, had disappeared; only a sort of curiosity remained in his brain to know whether the condition of life in the moon was more miserable in its chill and helplessness than his present state of drifting in the cold water.

Then he turned his head to take a last look at Mergatroyd. The lights were twinkling there. He could distinguish those of his own house on the hill-slope. He would never again set foot within its doors, enjoy the comfort of his fireside; never see Salome again. And then in that odd, incongruous manner in

which droll thoughts rise up in the mind at the most inappropriate moments, it occurred to him that there was to be anchovy-toast for breakfast. He had been asked by Mrs. Cusworth if he liked it, and she had promised it him. And as he drifted, immersed in the deadeningly cold brown water, at the thought the taste of anchovy came into his mouth.

The valley of the Keld contracted—a spur of hill ran forward from the ridge on which Mergatroyd was built, and forced the river and canal to describe a semi-circular bend. The line, however, had bored itself a way through the hill, and came out beyond, in a park, among stately but blackened elms. The spur contracted the volume of the flood, which therefore became deeper and more rapid.

With his numbed hands Mr. Pennycomequick unloosed his white neckcloth, and with it bound his arm to a branch of the poplar, tying the knot with one hand and his teeth, whilst the water ran through his mouth over his tongue, and washed away from it the smack of anchovy that fancy had conjured to it.

Then he resigned himself to his lot. A dull sense of being in the power of an inexorable fate came over him, the eagerness for life had faded away, and was succeeded by indifference as to what befel him, this to make way, as the cold and misery intensified, for impatience that all might be over speedily. He still looked up at the moon, but no longer cared what the life of the Selenites was like, it was their concern, not his. The thought of anchovy toast no longer had power to bring its flavour to his tongue. Then the moon passed behind a drift of vapour that obscured but did not extinguish it, and Jeremiah, half-unconsciously with his stiffening lips, found himself murmuring the words of Milton which he had learned at school, and had not repeated since:

'The wandering moon
Riding near her highest noon,

Like one that hath been led astray
Through the heav'ns wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.'

And so murmuring again, and more brokenly, at last fell into complete unconsciousness.

The critic who generally hits on those particulars in a story which are facts, to declare them to be impossibilities, and those characters to be unnatural, which are transcripts from nature, is certain to attack the author for making a man who trembles on the confines of death think of anchovy toast and quote 'Il Penseroso;' to which criticism we answer that he has had no experience such as that described, or he would know that what has been described above is in accordance with nature.

For how long Mr. Pennycomequick was unconscious he never knew, and no one, of course, was able to inform him. When he returned to himself, he found that he was lying in a contracted and queer bed, in the side of a chamber equally contracted and queer, tenanted, as far as he could make out, only by a contracted and queer human being, whose sex was not to be determined at first glance. If Mr. Pennycomequick had recovered his sense of smell at the same time that he recovered his other senses, he would have supposed that during the period of unconsciousness he had been steeped in creosote, for the atmosphere about him was charged with the odour of tar.

He was, in fact, on board a coal-barge, in the little low cabin, and in the little low berth that occupied almost an entire side of the cabin. This cabin was but five feet high; it was lighted by the hatchway, through which the steps descended into it. At the extremity, opposite the hatch, was an iron stove, the pipe from which poked through the deck above. At this stove was done all the cooking ever done in this establishment, and all the washing supposed to be

necessary in it, as a concession to public prejudice. On the side opposite Mr. Pennycomequick's berth was another, on which were heaped gowns, coats, wading-boots, a frying-pan, a bird-cage, a broken jug, Tom Treddlehoyle's 'Bairnsley-Folks' Almanack,' and a Bible. When that berth was tenanted by a human inmate, then the gowns, coats, boots, frying-pan, bird-cage, broken beer-jug, almanack and Bible were transferred to the floor.

Near the stove, peeling potatoes, and as she peeled them chucking the peelings on to the berth, with its accumulation of gowns, coats, frying-pan and other articles, was a woman wearing a man's black felt wide-awake, a man's coat, and smoking a mahogany-coloured pipe.

Her face was so brown, rugged, and masculine, that it was only possible to determine her sex when she stood up. Then she revealed petticoats, short, and fastened together between the calves, so as to convert them into something like Turkish trousers. Beneath them protruded feet as big as those of a man, encased in stout boots.

'Bless me!' exclaimed Mr. Pennycomequick. 'Where am I?'

Then the woman half rose. She could not stand upright in the cabin, she was so tall; and she came over to the berth in stooping posture.

'Eh, lad, tha'rt wick! Dos't a' want to know wheer tha' art? Why, for sure, tha'rt i't *Conquering Queen*, as carries coils t' Goole.'

'How came I here?'

'Ah reckon ah hugged (drew) thee aht o't water mysen. Ah saw thee floatin' by on tha' rig (back) taizled like i' an owd tree. Sea (so) I had thee aht i' a jiffy. If ah hed'dnt, tha'd been dead long agone. Hev naw a sup o' tea, and we'll talk after.'

Mr. Pennycomequick tried to move—to raise himself—but he was stiff in all his joints, and unable to stir more than his head.

'Weel naw!' exclaimed the woman, 'tha'rt wor nor I thowt. Ah be main sorry for thee. Ah'll bring t' peggy-tub, and turn't upside daan, and sot me a top, t'll do as weel as owt. Ah can talk ta thee a bit—I da'ant mind. But I'm glad tha'rt better, lad. Come na,' if tha woant ha' no tea, mebbe tha'll tak a sup o' tar-water.'

By degrees Mr. Pennycomequick got to understand how he had been rescued, and where he was.

The flood had caught the *Conquering Queen* coal barge some way below Mergatroyd, where the land was flat, and where accordingly the water had spread and its violence was expended. It had snapped the cable that fastened the boat, and she had been carried on down the canal. She had not been lifted and stranded beyond the banks, but had gone along with the current in the proper course. The *Conquering Queen* was the property of Ann Dewis, who inhabited and managed her, along with a boy, a gawky lad of fifteen, all legs and arms, which became entangled among ropes and chains, and stumbled over lumps of coal and mooring posts, who never descended the ladder without slipping and falling to the bottom in a heap; and whose face and body, if not perpetually begrimed with coal dust, would have shown blue with bruises.

Ann Dewis had given up her berth to the man she had drawn out of the water, and slept on the floor beside the clothing, bird-cage, cooking utensils, and literature sacred and profane.

'Sure sartain,' said Mrs. Dewis, "t'ull be a long time wal (until) thar't better; and curias it es, but all wor profezied i' Tom Treddlehoyle i' hes predicshons for 1870. Jest yo listen till this. November: Ah look for menny foakes bein' brawt low, throo abaht t' middle ta t'end a' t'munth; hahiver, theaze a good prospecht a' ther' sooin lookin' up agean, if it is at they're laid flat a' ther' back. T'es fortunate these

floods doant come offance (often) or we'd a' be ruined. Looik here, lad, ah'l clap t' pot o't'stove an' mak thee poultices for thy joints.'

Six weeks were passed by Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick in the cabin of the *Conquering Queen*, in great pain, sometimes in delirium, for he was attacked with rheumatic fever. Throughout his illness he was attended indefatigably by Ann Dewis. She called in no doctor, she procured no medicine. The sole remedy she knew and favoured, and which she exhibited against all diseases, was tar-water, a remedy easily made on board the barge, of material always at hand.

Ann Dewis was reduced to temporary inactivity by the destruction wrought by the flood. The canal was closed for repairs, and the repairs were likely to consume many months. Accordingly she could no longer ply between the coalpits and the wharf on the Humber. This enforced inactivity enabled her to devote her undivided attention to her patient. She had no house of her own—not an acre; no, not a foot of garden ground of her own in any of the various forms of ownership—freehold, copyhold or leasehold. She had no other home than her barge. She paid no taxes—no rates; the only charges that fell on her were the dues levied at the locks. And 'Darn it!' said Ann; 'that flood will ha' sent up the dues like scaldin' water sends up t'momenter.'

She belonged to no parish, came into no census, was attached to no denomination, and was identifiable as a Yorkshire woman of the West Riding only by her brogue. When the fever quitted Jeremiah Pennycomequick, it left him weak as a child. He lay in the berth powerless to rise; and long after his mind had cleared his joints were swollen and painful. He foresaw that many weeks, perhaps months, must elapse before he regained his former strength.

She did her best to amuse her patient as well as to

cure him. She read to him the richest jokes out of 'Tom Treddlehoyle,' and puzzled him with questions from the same, compounded as conundrums. But what interested him chiefly was her account of herself.

She had been married, but that was nowt but a scratch, she said. 'Wunce I thowt for sartain sure ah'd hev to give up to be Dewis, and stick to the Schofield.'

'Schofield!' said Mr. Pennycomequick, and passed his hand over his brow. His memory was somewhat affected. The name was familiar to him, but he did not recollect when he had heard it.

'Eh, lad, it wor a thing of no consekans. Ah'll tell thee t' tale.' For the benefit of south country readers we will to some extent modify the broad West Riding brogue.

'It was na' lang that Earle and I were acquainted——'

'Earle?'

'Eh, every man has two names, as he has two legs, and two arms, and two eyes and ears. He was called Earle Schofield for sartain; and he used to come and visit me in t' *Conquering Queen.* My mother was dead, and had left me a tidy bit o' brass, for shoo was a saving woman, an' shoo had been cap'n, boatswain, steward, and all to t' *Conquering Queen* ever sin' my father died. All t' brass he and she had addled (earned) was kip in—but there I wi'nt tell thee, not that I mistrust thee, but we're all frail creeturs, and terribly tempted. So there, lad, this here pipe belonged to Earle. He wor a bit o' a gentleman, he wor. He'd niver been in a coil barge trading up an' down t'canal. We'd a famous scheme atwixt us. He was to set up a coil store an' a hoffis by t'warf at Hüll, an' he sed that he knew o' a chap as 'ud sell t'good-will and all his custom for a hundred pounds. And Earle—he wor an uncommon clever hand at accounts, he figured it a' up on a slate, and he showed me how great 'ud

be our profits. And he to'd me that it wor the coil marchants as got a' t'profits out o' t'sale o' coils, and I got nobbut their crumbs, as I may say. And he showed me how if he sold and I carried coils we'd be rich in no time, and after we'd got married then I tow'd him where I kep' t'brass. I didn't tell him before—believe me. We were sitting on this deck, drawed up by t'side o' t'wharf at Hull, as he showed a' that, and as I tow'd him where I had my brass. Then he took t'pipe he wor smoking out o' his mouth and put it into mine, and sed I wor to kip it aleet wall he came back, he'd go an' deposit a hundred pound, he sed, for t'good-will, and secure the hoffis at wunce. And I let him take all my brass, for sartain I thow't as we'd been married for three weeks all war right, and what was mine was his. He took t'brass, and he went ashore, and t'last words he sed to me wor, "Ann, keep t'pipe aleet wall I return." I waited, but from that day I've niver clapt eyes on him.'

'And your money?'

'Nor on that noather.'

'What a great rascal he must have been!'

'Nay, I won't say that. We're a' sinful creeturs, and our temptations is terrible. 'Wot became o' him I can'na say, but for sure sartin he'd a mind to retarn to me, or he'd not ha' tow'd me keep t'pipe aleet. Wha can tell, he may ha' got a drop o' liquor on shore, and ha' been robbed, and then ashamed to come back and tell me; or he may ha' found t'chap none so ready to sell t'good-will—and so ha' gone about looiking for summat else and not found it—or he may ha' been took by them rampagin' an' roarin' lions, as seek whom they can lock up—the perlice. Nay! I'll not condemn him, and allow that he wor a rascal, for what sez Tom Treddlehoyle:

> '"This world, we all naw, hez its ups and its daans,
> An' shorter, wi'r time keeps windin',
> An' day after day we are cross i' wir way,
> Then speak of a man as yo find him."'

'But I think you found him serve you badly enough,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, from his berth, 'to walk off with your savings and leave you with nothing.'

'Nay, not exactly,' answered Anne. 'There wor this pipe for wun, he left; and,' after a pause, 'there wer Jozeph. T'bairn came varra comfortin' when I wer i' a tew aboot loising ma' brass. Besides, t' lad, Joe, ha' been ov use to me as much as I paid a lad afore seven shilling a week, and he hev a' been t'same to me for six years. If tha comes ta reckon at fifty-two weeks i't year, that's eighteen pound ten per hannum; and for six year that mounts up to nigh on a hundred and ten pound, which is a scoering off of t' account.'

'And that is his pipe you are smoking?'

'Ees, for sartaen. I sed I'd keep't aleet, and if he comes back at t' end o' seven more year, I'll say, "There, Earle, is t'pipe burning, and as for't account, Joe hev a' scored it off, interest and principal.'

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO? WHAT?

IT is hateful—hateful as poison—the packing, the turning out of drawers, and then the tilting of the drawers to get out the dust and grit and flue that has accumulated in the corners; the arranging of correspondence, the discrimination between valuables and things that may become valuable, and things that are not, but were valuable; the throwing away of rubbish, the consideration as to what things are to be disposed of, and if disposed of, how to be disposed of, and to whom, and all the business and care and misery of change of quarters.

And yet, how out of thorns spring roses, and out of troubles virtues come into bloom! Never, probably,

in our whole career did charity, the bond of all virtues, so luxuriate, throw out such all-embracing tendrils, emit such fragrance, ripen into such fruit, as on the occasion of change of quarters. Old boots, slightly damaged bonnets, heavy battered pieces of furniture, for which a dealer would not give sixpence; articles that would fetch nothing in a sale, antiquated school-books, magazines five years old, novels that have lost their backs, games, deficient in one or two pieces, odd gloves, iron bedsteads minus their brass knobs, and that have to be tied together with wire; cracked dishes, snipped tumblers, saucepans corroded with rust—with what lavish and lordly magnificence we distribute them to all who will accept such alms.

And then—what a lesson does change of quarters teach us, to discriminate between the worthless and the valuable; and with equanimity to endure separation from things which have become interesting to us, but which we cannot remove. When the author was a boy, his life was spent in travelling on the Continent; in rambles from the Pyrenees to the plains of Hungary, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, and wherever he went, he made collections of objects of curiosity, crystals, petrifactions, dried flowers, butterflies, mediæval armour, books. Before quitting any place of sojourn for a winter, or halt for a night, his father explored every pocket and crevice of the carriage, and turned out the treasures there secreted, on which his son's heart were set and his pocket-money had been expended.

Nothing escaped his eye, nothing melted his heart. The author came to a place bringing nothing with him, and left it, carrying nothing with him away, all he acquired he was forced to leave. It was an excellent discipline for life, and yet hardly attained; even to this day he finds that he clings to trifles.

How many times since boyhood has he had to shift

quarters? and each time he has experienced a struggle, and has had to surrender some things on which his heart was fixed, but from which it was, perhaps, well to be free. He recalls how one winter at Bayonne, he collected every match and spill-end that had been used for lighting cigars and candles till he had accumulated a trunk full. When, in spring, the move came, his father peremptorily refused to despatch this trunk-load of scorched paper scraps by *grande* or *petite vitesse* to Vienna, and they were consigned to the flames. When he was in Yorkshire, he had collected some prehistoric querns, stone hand-mills. When he contracted with a furniture-mover to translate his goods to the south of England, the man struck at the mill-stones, they were not in his bond. The author had to resign them; but his heart aches for those stones to this day.

When a family has inhabited a house for nigh on twenty years, it is incredible what accumulations have gathered round them, how every corner, cupboard, closet, drawers, the cellar, the attic are stuffed with articles of various utility and importance, or let us rather say of different degrees of inutility and worthlessness; none of which, however, can be spared without a pang, for to every one of them a recollection clings.

The Cusworths had been, not indeed twenty years, but approaching that time, in the house of Mr. Pennycomequick. Every room, the garden, the attic, were crowded with reminiscences, mostly pleasant; to the ordinary eye a thin veil of soot took the brilliance and sharpness off all things in this smoke-laden part of England, but to the girls, Salome and Janet, everything was overlaid with the gold dust of childish memories. Mrs. Cusworth had come to regard the house as a quiet home in which she might spend her declining days, without a care for the future of her children, for Janet was provided for, and Salome

would not be forgotten. But now, with the loss of Mr. Pennycomequick, the prop had fallen on which the future was reared; and suddenly she found herself in bad health, obliged to think about her prospects, and leave the house in quest of another home.

Mrs. Sidebottom, with the eagerness with which some women fly to do a spiteful thing, had taken advantage of her position to give the widow notice to remove.

The Cusworths had received notice to move within a fortnight, and it was not easy for them to find quarters into which to go. Salome had sought lodgings in Mergatroyd, but in vain. There none were vacant, and she had been obliged to engage temporarily a part of a house in the nearest manufacturing town, a house that was called Redstone, but which was popularly known only as Blackhole. It was a low house, surrounded by tall factories that crushed it into a well between them, into which no sun could penetrate, but which received all day and night showers of condensed soot. She counted herself fortunate in having secured this, and she had already given orders for the removal to it of some of the packing-cases filled with their goods.

The time had been one of strain to Salome, already distressed by the loss of her best friend, and the subsequent doubt about the identity of the corpse recovered. Mrs. Sidebottom had gone out of her way to make her feel uncomfortable, had said ill-natured things, had slighted her mother, and irritated Janet to the verge of an outbreak. She had been obliged to exercise great self-control, to disregard the sneers of Mrs. Sidebottom, to screen her mother and hold her sister in check. She had been painfully affected, moreover, by the mistrust Philip had shown, and though he had apologized for what he had said, the wound dealt to her self-respect was unhealed. She

felt this blow the more because she had unconsciously reposed confidence in Philip; not that he had given her reason for reliance on him, but that she had felt the need for someone to whom to look, now that Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick was removed, and she had trusted that he would be honourable and considerate in his conduct, as behoved a Pennycomequick.

To add to her difficulties, her mother had suddenly and unaccountably had a relapse, was seriously shaken, and in no condition to be moved. Unaccountably, for the attack had not come on when it might have been expected—on hearing the news of the death of the old manufacturer. She had borne up marvellously under this trial; the bringing the corpse to the house and the funeral had not materially affected her. She had spoken of the necessity she was under of leaving the house with sorrow, indeed, but not agitation; she had taken some interest in the assortment and packing of the family goods; and then, in the midst of the preparations to depart, had been taken alarmingly ill.

When the funeral was over, Mrs. Sidebottom had returned to her own house. All necessity for her remaining in that of her deceased half-brother was gone. Nevertheless, she was in and out of the house several times during the day.

One evening she had left after nine, having dined there with her nephew, who had moved into his uncle's apartments, and had enjoyed some of her brother's best wine.

At half-past nine the front-door was locked and chained, and the gaslight in the hall turned down, but not extinguished. Old Mr. Pennycomequick had kept early hours, and the servants observed the same routine of meals and work that had been instituted in his time, as they had received no orders to the contrary. Now that Philip had taken possession of his uncle's apartments on the first-floor, and went to the mill at the

same hours, and took his meals at the same hours, the house seemed to have relapsed into its old ways, out of which it had been bustled by the advent of Mrs. Sidebottom.

Mr. Pennycomequick's apartments consisted of a study, with a bedroom opening out of it. The front of the house on the same floor was taken up with a drawing-room, rarely occupied. A third door on the same landing admitted into the spare bedroom, in which the corpse of the drowned man had laid till the burial.

On the ground-floor were two rooms, corresponding to those occupied by Mr. Pennycomequick, and these had been given up to Mrs. Cusworth, one—the outer—served as sitting-room. The dining-room and a breakfast-room—the latter under the spare bedchamber—completed the arrangement on the ground-floor. Formerly Mrs. Cusworth and her daughters had slept on the story above the drawing-room and Mr. Pennycomequick's suite, and Salome's apartment were there still; but of late, owing to her mother's infirmity, her bed had been transferred to the inner room, which had been transformed from the housekeeper's office to a sleeping-apartment for the old lady, to whom it was injurious to ascend many steps; and as it was not advisable that Mrs. Cusworth should be alone at night, Salome had slept in the room with her. Since the arrival of Janet, however, she had returned to her apartment upstairs, as the old lady had expressed a wish to have her married daughter with her.

'My dear,' she had said, 'it is not much more that I can expect to see of Janet. She will have to return to her husband before long, and I am not likely to live to have the pleasure of many of her visits; so, if you do not mind, Salome, I should wish her to sleep in my room whilst she is here, that I may have her by me as much as I may.'

Salome had accordingly returned to her chamber upstairs. She was glad that at this time her sister was there to relieve her of attendance on her mother, whilst she went in search of lodgings and was engaged in packing.

'I am expecting a summons to return to Elbœuf every day,' said Janet, 'directly I get the news of the route of the Prussians. Providence never intended that barbarism should prevail over culture; and the French have such accomplished manners, and such perfect taste—why, the German ladies I have seen have no idea how to dress.'

'You forget, Janet,' said the sister, 'that the barbarians did, of old, overwhelm Roman civilization.'

'Oh yes; but only that they might assimilate the culture, and become civilized themselves. If the result of this wretched war were that German ladies learned how to put on their clothes tastefully, I could almost forgive Sedan and Metz.'

Salome had as little knowledge of the arrangement arrived at between Mrs. Sidebottom and Philip as has the reader, and for the same reason. It had not been divulged. She, of course, could ask no questions. The reader does, but he must wait. He shall be told presently. Suffice it for him to know that Mrs. Sidebottom had, unopposed, sworn to her brother's death, without will, and had taken out letters of administration.

Philip did not have his meals with the Cusworth party; they were served to him apart.

On this evening, after the house was locked up, and the servants had retired to bed, Salome was in her own room; she had been engaged there for some hours, examining and sorting the house-bills, and estroying such as were not required to be preserved. When this was done, she began to pack her little library in a deal case, first wrapping each volume carefully in newspaper. As she did this she came

on a garden manual that Mr. Pennycomequick had given her on her birthday when fifteen. The sight of this book suddenly reminded her of a score of hyacinth-bulbs she had put in a dark closet under the stairs, in which to form shoots before they were put in their glasses. The book had advised this as a corrective to the development of leaf at the expense of flower. In this cupboard, which Janet and she as children had named the Pummy closet—a name that had adhered to it ever since—she kept as well sundry garden requisites.

Fearful lest she should forget the bulbs if she postponed their removal to another time, and accustomed, on principle, to do at once whatever occurred to her mind as a thing that had to be done, she gently opened her door and lightly descended the staircase.

The steps were carpeted, so that her foot was noiseless. She had no need of a candle, for the gas, though reduced, still burnt in the hall.

She reached the bottom quickly; she was unwilling to disturb and alarm her mother, and so trod noiselessly through the hall to the closet door, beneath the steps. Her garden-gloves, some tools in a little box that had been given her by Janet, and the bulbs were there, the latter, in a row, showing stout horns. She gathered these bulbs into a chip-basket, and took the rest of her possessions in the other hand. Thus encumbered, she closed the Pummy closet door with her foot, put down the basket, turned the key, took up the basket and stepped out into the hall with the intention of reascending the stairs as noiselessly as she had come down.

But before she had reached the foot and had turned the balustrade, she was startled to see a figure on the first landing. At first shock she thought it was Mr. Jeremiah Pennycomequick dressed to go out, as she had seen him on the night that he disappeared. If the hour was not now midnight, it was near it.

Salome could not see whence the figure had come, whether from Philip's room or from the spare bedroom. Only from the drawing-room he could not have issued, as that door was in view, and was shut.

Who was it?

The figure descended slowly, and with inaudible tread. The light from the gas was sufficient to show that the figure was that of a man, but not to let her see his face.

With a sickening feeling at the heart, and a chill that ran through every artery and frosted her blood, and deprived her both of motion and the will to move, she stood looking at the apparition that glided down the staircase, leisurely, noiselessly. She recognised the great-coat and hat—they were those of Mr. Pennycomequick. The great coat was that in which the corpse had been discovered invested.

Who was this coming—coming probably from the room recently tenanted by that strange, awful, dead man?

That was the first thought of horror that shot through her brain, followed by another still more horrible, 'What is it?'

For a while Salome was bereft of power of speech and motion. There was a sensation in her brain as though a handle were being turned that had attached to it every nerve in her body, and that they were being spun off her and on to a reel, like silk from a cocoon. Her hands contracted on what she held; she could not have let them fall had she willed to relax her grasp. They stiffened as do the hands of a corpse. She could not cry out, her tongue was paralyzed. She could not stir a step forward or backward; all control over her knees was gone from her.

When the figure had nearly reached the bottom of the stairs, it stopped and turned its head towards her, and looked at her.

The light of the lowered gas-jet was on her and off the face of the apparition; all she saw was black shadow, as all she had seen of the face of the corpse on the bed had been—a black handkerchief cast over it. But she distinguished the hair, somewhat long behind the ears, and frowzy whiskers about the jaws. That was all she could make out in that moment of acute, agonizing horror. The figure stood looking at her, and she heard the clock in the hall, tick, tick, tick, tick, and then begin the premonitory growl that preceded striking. The figure moved down the final steps, and stole in the same stealthy, noiseless manner to the garden door, and disappeared through it.

The look of the back, the set of the well-known overcoat, the way in which the hat was worn, all recalled to her the dear, lost friend, and yet she knew it could not be he. He would never have inspired her with shuddering dread. He would not have passed her without a word.

In another moment the spell of rigidity was taken off her. The blood rushed tingling through every vein, her hands, her feet, recovered activity, her heart bounded and shook off its fear, and her mind recovered its proper energy.

She ran after the apparition, and found that the garden door was actually open. Instantly, without further consideration, she shut and locked it, and then flew upstairs and knocked vehemently, loudly, at Philip Pennycomequick's door.

He opened it, and was surprised to see Salome on the landing, breathless.

'Is your mother worse?' he asked, for he saw that she was shaking and white.

'Oh, Mr. Pennycomequick, do tell me. Have you had a man here with you?'

'I do not understand.'

'I have seen someone descend the stairs. If he did not come from your study, he issued from that

room in which—in which——' She shuddered. 'I mean from the spare bedroom.'

'No one has been with me.'

'But he came down the staircase, slowly and silently, like a shadow, and passed me.'

'I have seen and heard no one.'

'And yet, there has been someone in the house.'

Philip thought, and then said: 'Miss Cusworth, your nerves have been over-wrought. You have been imposed on by your imagination.'

'But—the garden door. I found it open. I have just locked it. The figure went out through it.'

'Did you distinguish who it was?'

'No, he came from the best bedroom, wearing dear uncle's—I mean Mr. Pennycomequick's overcoat and hat.'

Philip again mused.

'All my poor uncle's clothing,' he said, after a moment of thought, 'all that remained, the overcoat included, I ordered yesterday to be laid out in the spare chamber. I told your mother to dispose of them as she thought proper. I made no doubt that she knew of poor persons to whom they would be serviceable.'

'But no poor person would come at this time of night, and slip out stealthily at the garden door, which ought to be locked at half-past nine.'

'Let us go into the spare room and reassure ourselves,' said Philip. 'You will find the overcoat there, and then, perhaps, you will come to the same conclusion that I have, that you have been over-worried and over-wrought, and that fancy has conjured up the ghost.'

He went back into his room for a candle, and Salome, standing alone, with beating heart, on the landing, asked herself whether she had been deluded by her imagination.

Philip returned with the candle. He smiled and

said: 'I remember particularly that great-coat. It was laid on the bed, and the hat by it. I went into the room this evening, about half-past eight, and both were there then.' He had his hand on the door. 'You are not afraid to come in with me?'

Salome shook her head. She had begun to hope that she had been a prey to fancy.

He opened the door, went in, and held the light over his head. The great coat and the hat—were gone!

CHAPTER XVII.

MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY.

NEXT morning Salome was agreeably surprised to find her mother better, brighter, and without the expression of mingled alarm and pain that her face had worn for the last two days. She refrained from telling her about the mysterious nocturnal visitor, because it was her invariable practice to spare the old lady everything that might cause her anxiety and provoke a relapse. It could do no good to unnecessarily alarm her, and Salome knew how to refrain from speaking unnecessarily.

Before paying her mother her morning visit, Salome made an attempt to get at the bottom of the matter that puzzled her and rendered her uneasy. It was the duty of the housemaid to lock the doors at night. Salome sent for her, and inquired about that which gave admission to the garden. The girl protested that she had fastened up as usual, and had not neglected any one of the doors.

Notwithstanding this assurance, Salome remained unshaken in her conviction that the open doorway was due to the neglect of the servant. She knew that in the class of domestics, truth is esteemed too precious to be wasted by telling it, and that the

asseveration of a maid charged with misdemeanour is to be read like morning dreams. She did not pursue the matter with the young woman, so as not to involve her in fresh falsehoods; she, herself, remained of the same opinion.

On her way across the hall to her mother's room, Salome noticed that the garden-door was not only locked, but that the key had been withdrawn from it. This Philip had done last night, and he had not replaced it. It now occurred to her that she had omitted taking a step which might, and probably would, have led to the detection of the trespasser. The door led into the garden, but egress from the garden could only be had through the door in the wall of the lower or vegetable garden, rarely used, generally locked, through which manure was brought, and the man occasionally employed in the garden passed when there employed. As this gate would certainly be locked, the man who had gone out of the house into the garden could only have escaped thence with difficulty. If he had been at once pursued, he might have been captured before he could scale the wall. This had not occurred to her or to Philip at the time.

'Salome, my dear,' said Mrs. Cusworth, after her daughter had kissed her and congratulated her on her improvement, 'I am thankful to say that I am better. A load that has troubled and oppressed me for some days has been lifted off my heart.'

'I am glad, mamma,' said the girl, 'that at last you are reconciled to the change. It was inevitable. I dare say you will feel better when we are settled at Redstone.'

'My dear,' answered Mrs. Cusworth, 'I must abandon the idea of going there.'

'Where? To Redstone?'

'Yes. The house is beyond my means. I cannot possibly afford it.'

'But—mamma.' Salome was startled. 'I have already secured the lodgings.'

'Only for a quarter, and it would be better to sacrifice a quarter's rent than turn out again in three months. I could not endure the shift again, so quickly following this dreadful change.'

'But—mamma!' Salome was greatly taken aback. 'This is springing a surprise on me. We have no other house into which we can go.'

'A cottage, quite a cottage, such as the artisans occupy, must content us. We shall have to cut our coat according to our cloth.'

'Mamma! You allowed me to engage Redstone.'

'I did not then know how we were circumstanced. To make both ends meet we shall have to pinch.'

'But why pinch? You told me before that we had enough on which to live quietly but comfortably.'

'I was mistaken. I have had a great and unexpected loss.'

'Loss, mamma! What loss?'

'I mean—well,' the old lady stammered, 'I mean a sore disappointment. I am not so well off as I had supposed. I had miscalculated my resources.'

'Have you only just discovered what your means really are?'

'You must not excite her,' said Janet reproachfully.

'I do not wish to do so,' explained Salome. 'But I am so surprised, so puzzled—and this is such an upset of our plans at the last moment, after I had engaged the lodgings—I do not know what to think about it.' She paused, considered, and said with a flush in her face: 'Mamma, you surely had not reckoned on poor uncle's will?'

Mrs. Cusworth hesitated, then said: 'Of course, it is a severe blow to me that no provision had been made for you and me. We might fairly have reckoned on receiving something after what was done for Janet, and you were his favourite.'

'Oh, mamma, you did not count on this?'

'Remember that you are left absolutely destitute. What little I have saved will hardly support us both. Janet can do nothing for us just now.'

'Because of the Prussians,' said Mrs. Baynes. 'Wait a bit; as soon as we have swept them from the face of fair France, I shall make you both come to me at Elbœuf.'

'Mamma,' said Salome, 'I am still puzzled. You knew very well that uncle's will was worthless when you let me make arrangements for Redstone, and now that I have settled everything you knock over my plans. If you had told me——'

'I could not tell you. I did not know,' said the widow. 'That is to say, I had misreckoned my means.'

'Then there is no help for it. I must try to get out of the agreement for Redstone, if I can. I am afraid the agent will not let me off. We shall have to pay double rent, and there is little chance of underletting Redstone at this time of the year.'

'Better pay double than have to make a double removal; it will be less expense in the end.'

'Perhaps so,' answered Salome; then she left her mother's room that she might go upstairs and think over this extraordinary change of plans. She was painfully aware that she had been treated without due consideration, subjected unnecessarily to much trouble and annoyance.

In the hall she saw Mr. Philip Pennycomequick. He beckoned to her to follow him to the garden-door, and she obeyed. He unlocked the door.

'I took away the key last night,' he said, 'and now you see my reason.'

He pointed to the turf.

A slight fall of snow, that comminuted snow that is like meal, had taken place at sundown, and it had covered the earth with a fine film of white, fine as

dust. No further fall had taken place during the night.

A track of human feet was impressed on the white surface from the door to the steps that gave access to the vegetable garden.

Without exchanging a word, both followed the track, walking wide of it, one on each side. A foot-print marked each step, and the track led, less distinctly, down the lower garden to the door in the wall at the bottom, through which it doubtless passed, as there were no signs of a scramble. The door was locked.

'Have you the key?' asked Philip.

'I have not. There is one on Mr. Pennycome-quick's bunch, and my mother has a second.'

'It matters not,' said Philip. 'Outside is a path along which the mill people have gone this morning to their work, and have trampled out all the traces of our mysterious visitor. The prints are those of unshod feet. The shape of the impression tells me that.'

They returned to the house.

'This unpleasant incident convinces me of one thing,' said Philip. 'It will not do for me to live in this place alone. I can explain this mysterious affair in one or other way. Either one of the servants having a brother, cousin, or lover, whom she wished to favour with the pick of my uncle's clothes, that she knew were laid out for distribution, allowed him to come and choose for himself——'

'Or else——'

'Or else the gardener left the little door in the wall ajar. Some passing tramp, seeing it open, ventured in, and finding nothing worth taking in the garden, pursued his explorations to the house, where he was fortunate enough to find another door open, through which he effected his entrance and helped himself to what he first laid hands on. He would have taken more had he not been disturbed by you.'

'He was not disturbed by me.'

'He may have seen you pass down the stairs, and so have taken the alarm and decamped. My second explanation is the least probable, for it demands a double simultaneous neglect of fastening doors by two independent persons, the housemaid and the gardener.'

'The gardener has not been working for some weeks.'

'Then how this has occurred concerns me less than the prevention of a recurrence,' said Philip. 'I must have a responsible person in the house. May I see your mother?'

As he asked, he entered the hall, and Janet at the same moment came out of her mother's sitting-room with a beaming face. She slightly bowed to Philip, and said eagerly to her sister, 'Salome, the postman is coming down the road. I am sure he brings me good news. I am going to the door to meet him.'

Salome admitted Philip into the sitting-room. She would have withdrawn, but he requested her to stay.

'What I have to say to Mrs. Cusworth,' he said shortly, 'concerns you as well as your mother.'

He took a chair at the widow's request, and then, in his matter-of-fact business fashion, plunged at once into the subject of his visit.

'I dare say that you have wondered, madam, that neither Mrs. Sidebottom nor I have made any call on you lately with a proposal. The fact is that only yesterday did my aunt and I arrive at a definite and permanent settlement. You are aware that she has acted as administratrix of my uncle's property. We have, after some difference, come to an arrangement, and by that arrangement I take the factory under my management—that, however, is not a matter of interest to you. What does concern you is the agreement we have struck about the house, which is become practically mine. I shall live in it henceforth and conduct

the business so successfully carried on by my uncle, and I hope and trust without allowing it to decline. You are well aware that Mrs. Sidebottom gave you formal notice to quit; this was a formality, because at the time nothing was settled relative to the firm and the house. Please not to consider for a moment that there was a slight intended. As far as I am concerned, nothing could have been more foreign to my wishes. Do not allow that notice to affect your arrangements.'

'We accepted the notice, and have made our plans to leave,' said Salome quietly.

'In the first uncertainty as to what would be done,' said Philip, 'Mrs. Sidebottom came to you, Mrs. Cusworth, and I fear spoke with haste and impetuosity. She was excited, and at the time in a state of irritation with me, who had withstood her wishes. Since then an arrangement has been concluded between us which leaves me the house. This house henceforth belongs to me, and not to my aunt, who ceases to have authority within its walls. I am going to live here. But, madam, as you may well believe, I am incapable of managing domestic affairs. I have been unused to have such duties devolve on me. I shall be engaged in mastering new responsibilities which will occupy my whole attention, and it is imperative that I should be spared the distraction of housekeeping. The event of last night—the appearance of a man invading this house——'

Mrs. Cusworth turned deadly pale, and a look of fear came into her eyes. Salome hastily turned to Philip, and her appealing glance told him he must not touch on a subject that would alarm and agitate her mother.

'I mean,' said Philip hastily, 'that a man, inexperienced like myself, entering a large house in which there are domestics, of whose freaks and vagaries he knows nothing, and desires to know less, is like a colonist in Papua, of the natives of which nothing

certain has been revealed. They may be cannibals; they may, on the other hand, be inoffensive. Of landladies in lodging-houses I have had a long and bitter experience. I have run the gamut of them, from the reduced gentlewoman to the wife of an artisan, and I believe it is one of those professions which, like vivisection, dries up the springs of moral worth. It will be essential to my happiness, I may say to my success in the business, to have a responsible person to manage the house for me. You, madam, will relieve me from grave embarrassments if you will consent to remain here on the same terms as heretofore. It will indeed be conferring on me a lasting favour, which I know I am not justified in asking.'

'It is very good of you to suggest this,' began the widow.

'On the contrary,' interrupted Philip, 'it is selfish of me to propose it—to wish to retain you in a place where you must be surrounded by sorrowful reminiscences, and tie you to work when you ought to be free from every care.'

'I thank you,' said Mrs. Cusworth. 'It so happens that I am distressed by pecuniary losses, and I am therefore glad to accept your offer.'

'I am sorry, madam, that you have met with losses. But I do not wish to force you to accept obligations for which you do not feel yourself equal without understanding exactly how matters stand. Mrs. Sidebottom and I have consulted together about the probable wishes of my deceased uncle, and we unite in thinking that he never intended to leave Miss Cusworth unprovided for. The will he had drawn out perhaps erred on the side of excessive liberality to her and disregard of the claims of his own relations. That was cancelled —how, we cannot say. Suffice it to say, it was cancelled, but without cancelling the obligation to do something for Miss Cusworth. We are quite sure that Mr. Pennycomequick intended to provide for her,

and Mrs. Sidebottom and I agree in proposing for her acceptance such a sum as was invested by my late uncle for the benefit of Mrs. Baynes on her marriage a twelve month ago.'

He was the lawyer—formal, cold, stiff—as he spoke, measuring his sentences and weighing his words. Even when he endeavoured to be courteous, as when inviting the widow to stay on in his house, he spoke without ease of manner, graciousness, and softness of tone.

'Of course,' said Mrs. Cusworth, 'it has been a great disappointment to us that we received nothing from Mr. Pennycomequick——'

'Mother!' interrupted Salome, quivering, flushing to the roots of her hair, then turning white. Mrs. Cusworth was one of those ordinary women who think it becomes them not to receive a favour as a favour, but as a due. Salome at once felt the grace and kindness of the arrangement proposed for her advantage by Philip, and had little hesitation in attributing it to him, and freeing Mrs. Sidebottom from the initiative, at least, in it. But her mother supposed it due to her dignity to receive it as a concession to a legitimate claim.

Salome did not look in Philip's face. Afraid that her mother might say something further that was unsuited to the situation, she interposed:

'Mr. Pennycomequick,' she said, in a low, gentle voice, 'you said just now that you had no claim on our services. You have created such a claim. Your proposal is so generous, so kindly intentioned, and so far transcending what we had any right to ask or to expect, that you lay us under an obligation which it will be a pleasure for us to discharge. My dear mother is not herself able to do much with her hands, but she is like a general in a battlefield—on a commanding eminence she issues her directions, and I am her orderly who fly about carrying her commands

We accept with gratitude and pleasure your offer to continue in this house, at least for a while. For that other offer that concerns me alone, will you allow me time to consider it?'

At that moment, before Philip could reply, the door was burst open, and Janet rushed in, with a face of despair, holding an open letter before her.

'Mamma! Oh, mamma! The Prussians have killed him. Albert—has been shot!'

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHN DALE.

IN the cabin of the *Conquering Queen*, Mr. Pennycomequick had much time for thought before he was sufficiently recovered to leave his berth. He fell to wondering what Salome and her mother, Mrs. Sidebottom and his nephew, had thought of his disappearance.

'Can you get me a back newspaper, or some account of the flood?' he asked of Ann Dewis. 'I am interested to hear what happened, and whether I am among those accounted to have fallen victims.'

After several trials, Mrs. Dewis procured what was required in pamphlet form—a reprint from one of the West Riding papers of its narrative of the inundation, of the appearance of the country after it had subsided, from its special correspondent, and full lists of the lost and drowned. Mr. Pennycomequick read this account by the light that descended from the hatchway; read about the havoc effected in Keld-dale, the walls thrown down, the cottages inundated, the roads and the embankments torn up, and then among the names of those lost he read his own, with the surprising information that the body had been recovered, and though frightfully mutilated, had been identified.

This was news indeed. That he was esteemed dead did not surprise Mr. Pennycomequick when he learned how long he had been ill, but that some other body should have been mistaken for his was indeed inexplicable.

'By this time,' said he to himself, 'Salome will have proved my will and Louisa will have exhausted her vituperation of my memory.'

It took him two days to digest what he had learned. As he recovered, his mind recurred to those thoughts which had engaged him on the night of the flood, as he walked on the towpath by the canal.

If he were to return to Mergatroyd when supposed to be dead, he was confident that Salome and her mother would receive him with unfeigned delight, and without reluctance surrender to him what they had received through his bequest. But he was by no means sure of himself, that in the joy of his return he would be able to control his feelings so as not to show to Salome what their real nature was.

He recalled his prayer to Heaven, that he might have the way pointed out to him which he should go, and startlingly, in a manner unexpected, in a direction not anticipated, the hand of Providence had flashed out of the sky and had pointed out his course. It had snapped his tie to Mergatroyd—at all events temporarily; had separated him from Salome, and set him where he had leisure and isolation in which to determine his conduct. Jeremiah was a man of religious mind, and this consideration profoundly affected him. He had been carried from his home, and his name blotted out of the book of the living.

What would be the probable consequences were he to return to Mergatroyd as soon as he was recovered? The very desire he felt to be back, to see Salome again, was so strong within him that it constituted evidence to his mind that if he were at home, in the exuberant joy of meeting her again he would let drop those

words which his judgment told him ought not to be spoken. Other thoughts besides these exercised his mind.

He turned to the past, to his dead brother Nicholas, and his conscience reproached him for having maintained the feud so persistently and so remorselessly. Nicholas had suffered for what he had done, and by suffering had expiated his fault. He, Jeremiah, had, moreover, visited on the guiltless son the resentment he bore to the father. He endeavoured to pacify his conscience by the reflection that he had made a provision for Philip in his will; but this reflection did not satisfy him. Philip was the representative of the family, and Jeremiah had no right to exclude him from the firm without a trial of his worth.

Then he turned to another train of ideas connected with his present condition.

Was his health likely to be sufficiently restored to enable him to resume the old routine of work? Would a resumption of his duties conduce to the re-edification of his health? Would it not retard, if not prevent, complete recovery? Would it not be a better course for him to shake himself free from every care—keep his mind disengaged from business till his impaired constitution had been given time to recover? He knew that rheumatic fever often seriously affected the heart, and he asked himself whether he dare return to the conflict of feeling, the inner struggle, sure to attend a recurrence to the same condition as before. Would it not be the wisest course for him to go abroad for a twelvemonth or more, to some place where his mind might recover its balance, his health be re-established—and he might acquire that perfect mastery over his feelings which he had desired, but which he had lost.

What did he care about the fortune he had amassed—by no means a large one, but respectable? He was a man of simple habits and of no ambition. He was interested in his business, proud of the good name the

firm had ever borne. He would be sorry to think that Pennycomequick should cease to be known in Yorkshire as the title of an old-established reliable business associated with figured linen damasks. But was his presence in the factory essential to its continuance?

He looked at Ann Dewis squatted by the fire smoking. For seventeen years she had kept Earle Schofield's pipe going, which he had put into her mouth, and she had been faithful to a simple request. He had put his mill into Salome's hands, and had said, 'Keep it going.' Was she less likely to fulfil his wish than had been Ann Dewis to the desire of Earle Schofield?

He was not concerned as to his means of subsistence should he determine to remain as one dead. He had an old friend, one John Dale, at Bridlington, the only man to whom he was not reserved and suspicious—the only man of whom he took counsel when in doubt and difficulty.

John Dale had a robust common-sense, and to him Jeremiah resolved to apply. When John Dale first went to Bridlington he had been lent a considerable sum of money by his friend, which had not been repaid, but which, now that Dale had established a good practice as a surgeon, he was ready and willing to repay. John Dale had been constituted trustee on the occasion of Janet's marriage. He had paid visits to Mergatroyd, and Jeremiah had visited Bridlington; but as both were busy men, such visits had been short and few. Though, however, they saw little of each other, their mutual friendship remained unimpaired.

As soon as Mr. Pennycomequick was sufficiently recovered to leave the barge, he provided himself with a suit of clothes at a slop-shop, and settled into an inn in the town of Hull, whence he wrote to Dale to come to him. He had his purse in his pocket when he was carried away from Mergatroyd, and the purse contained a few sovereigns, sufficient to satisfy his immediate necessities.

'Pon my word, never was so astonished in my life!' shouted John Dale, as he burst into the room occupied by his friend, then stood back, looked at him from head to foot, and roared.

Mr. Pennycomequick was strangely altered. He had been accustomed to shave his face, with the exception of a pair of cutlets that reached no lower than the lobe of his ears. Now his face was frouzy with hair: lips, jaws, cheeks, chin, throat, were overgrown, and the hair had got beyond the primary stage of stubbledom. He had been wont to attire himself in black or Oxford mixture of a dark hue, to wear a suit of formal cut, and chiefly to affect a double-breasted frock coat that gave a specially substantial mercantile look to the man. The suit in which he was now invested was snuff-coloured and cut away in stable fashion.

'Upon my word, this is a regeneration! Dead as a manufacturer, alive as a man on the turf. Is the moral transformation as radical? What is the meaning of this? I saw your death in the papers. I wrote to Salome about it, a letter of condolence, and had her reply. How came you to life again, you impostor, and in this guise?'

The doctor—he was really a surgeon—but everyone called him Dr. Dale, was a stout, florid man, with his hair cut short as that of a Frenchman, like the fur on the back of a mole. He was fresh, boisterous in manner when out of the sick-room, but when engaged on a patient, laid aside his roughness and noise. His cheeriness, his refusal to take a gloomy view of a case, made him popular, and perhaps went some way towards encouraging nature to make an effort to throw off disease.

Jeremiah told him the story of his escape.

'And now,' said Dale, 'I suppose you are going back. By Jove, I should like to see the faces when you reappear in the family circle thus dressed and behaired.'

'Before I consider about going back, I want you to overhaul me,' said Jeremiah, 'and please to tell me plainly what you find. I'm not a woman to be frightened at bad news.'

'At once, old man. Off with those togs,' shouted the surgeon.

When the medical examination was over, Dale told Mr. Pennycomequick that his heart was weak, but that there was no organic derangement. He must be careful of himself for some time to come. He must avoid climbing hills, ascending many stairs.

'As, for instance, the several flights of my factory.'

'Yes—you must content yourself with the office.'

'I might as well give up at once the entire management if I may not go to the several departments and see what is going on there.'

'You must economize the pulsations of your heart for awhile. You will find yourself breathless at every ascent. Your heart is at fault, not your lungs. The machine is weak, and you must not make an engine of one-horse power undertake work that requires one of five. If you could manage to knock off work altogether——'

'For how long?'

'That depends. You are not a boy with superabundant vitality and any amount of recuperative power. After the age of fifty we have to husband our strength; we get well slowly, not with a leap. A child is down to-day and up to-morrow. An old man who is down to-day is up perhaps that day month. The thing of all others for you would be to go abroad for a bit, to—let us say, the South of France or Sicily, or better still, Cairo, lead a *dolce far niente* life, forget worries, neglect duties, disregard responsibilities, and let Nature unassisted be your doctor and nurse.'

'Now look here, Dale,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'your advice jumps with my own opinion. I have been considering whilst convalescent what was the good

of my drudging on at Mergatroyd. I have made a fortune—a moderate one, but one that contents me—and have no need to toil through the last years of life, to fag out the final straws of existence.'

'Fag out!' exclaimed Dale, 'you dog, you—why, you have gone into the Caldron of Pelias, and have come forth rejuvenated.'

'If I remember the story aright,' retorted Jeremiah, 'Pelias never came out of the caldron. I am like Pelias in this, that I have gone into the waters of Lethe.'

'Now, Jeremiah, old boy,' said the surgeon, 'let this be a settled thing, you husband your strength for a twelvemonth at least, and you will then be vigorous as ever. If you insist on going into harness at once, in two years I shall be attending your funeral.'

'Very well,' said Jeremiah, 'if things are in order at Mergatroyd, I will go, but I cannot allow the business to fall into confusion. To tell you the truth, I have reasons which make me wish not to go back there till I am quite restored, but I should like to know what is going on there.'

'That I can perhaps tell you. I have had a letter from Salome. Do you know, my friend, when I have been away from Bridlington, on a holiday, I have been on thorns, thinking that everything must be going out of gear on account of my absence, that my *locum tenens* has let patients slip and mismanaged difficult cases; yet when I have returned I have found that I was not missed—all has gone on swimmingly without me. You will find that it has been the same at Mergatroyd.'

'But what says Salome?'

'In the first place that cricket, Janet, is back. She was sent home lest an Uhlan should fall in love with her or she fall in love with an Uhlan, and now her husband is dead. Like a fool he served as a volunteer, uncalled for, as he was an Englishman.'

'Albert Baynes dead! Then you will have some work on your hands as trustee.'

'So I shall. Now about your affairs. It seems that the will you drew up against my advice; without taking legal opinion, was so much waste-paper; Salome says merely that it proved invalid, so Mrs. Sidebottom had to take out letters of administration, and divide your property between her and your nephew Philip.'

'What!—Salome get nothing! I shall go back at once and send those two vultures to the right about.'

'Have patience; they came out better than you might have expected. It has been arranged that Philip shall live in your house and undertake the management of the factory, and he has asked Mrs. Cusworth to remain on in the old place in the same position as she occupied before.'

'I am glad they have had the grace not to turn her out.'

'That is not all. As it was clearly your wish that Salome should be liberally provided for, your sister and nephew have agreed to fund for her the same amount that was invested for her sister Janet. Now I do not know what your will was, but it seems to me that nothing could have been better, even if you had the disposing of it. Your natural heirs get their rights, and your pet Salome is honourably and even handsomely treated by them.'

Jeremiah said nothing; his chin fell on his breast. He had not thought that Mrs. Sidebottom would do a generous thing. Of Philip he knew nothing; but what he had just heard predisposed him in his favour.

'Now take my advice, Jeremiah,' continued Dr. Dale. 'Let Philip go on where he is. He has thrown up his place in a solicitor's office at Nottingham, and, as Salome writes, is devoting himself energetically to the work of the mill, and learning all the ramifications of the business. You wanted someone to relieve you,

and you have the man—the right man, already in the place.'

'He may get everything wrong.'

'I do not believe it. You have an aversion to lawyers, but let me tell you that a lawyer's office is an excellent school; there men learn to know human nature, how to deal with men, and get business habits. The fellow must have a good heart, or he would not have come to an arrangement with his aunt to part with a large sum of money for Salome. Besides, Salome is no fool, and she writes of him in high praise for his diligence, his regular habits, and his kindness and consideration for her mother.'

John Dale paused for Jeremiah to say something; but his friend remained silent, with his head down, thinking.

'If you go back,' said the doctor, 'you will throw everything wrong. You will worry yourself and will take the spirit out of Philip. Trust him. He is on his mettle. If he makes a blunder, that is natural, and he will suffer for it; but he will commit none that is fatal; he is too shrewd for that.'

'Dale,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'if I make up my mind not to return to Mergatroyd, I make up my mind at the same time to leave those there in ignorance that I am still alive.'

'As you like. It would not be amiss. Then Philip would work with better energy. If things go wrong I can always drop you a line and recall you, and you can appear as *Deus ex machinâ*, and set all to rights. I have often thought that half the aggravation of leaving this world must be the seeing things going to sixes and sevens without being able to right them, a business we have got together being scattered, a reputation we have built up being pulled down; to have to see things going contrary to our intentions, and be unable to put out a finger to mend them; to hear ourselves criticised, and ill-natured, and false stories

told of us, and be incapable of saying a word in our own defence. I will tell you a story. At one time when I went to dinner-parties I was the first to go. But on one occasion I stayed, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith left before me. No sooner were their backs turned than the company fell to criticising the Smiths, their pretensions, the airs they gave themselves, till the Brownes departed, whereupon the conversation became scandalous about the Brownes: then the Jones family departed. Thereupon I learned that the Joneses were living beyond their means, and were on the verge of bankruptcy. So on till the last was gone. After that I have never been the first to leave; I try to be last, so as to leave only my host and hostess behind to discuss and blacken me. Now, Jeremiah, you have gone out quickly and unexpectedly, and if you could steal back to Mergatroyd unperceived, then you will find that the maxim *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* is not being observed. You are fortunate; you can return at will and correct false estimates. That is not given save to the exceptionally privileged.'

'You will go to Mergatroyd for me,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'and see with your own eyes how things are?'

'Certainly I will. Do you know, old fellow,' said Dale, with a twinkle in his eye, 'I have sometimes feared for you, feared lest you should make a ghastly fool of yourself, and make that dear little piece of goods, Salome, your wife. It would not do, old boy; if you had done it I would have ceased to respect you; you would have lost the regard and provoked the ridicule of everyone in Mergatroyd. Old boy, it would never have done.'

'No,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'it would never have done; you are right, it would never have done.'

'It would have been a cruelty to her,' pursued Dale, 'for Nature never designed Winter to mate with Spring, to bring a frost on all the sweet blossoms of

youth, and in checking the rising sap, perhaps to kill the plant.'

'No,' said Jeremiah, 'it would never have done.'

CHAPTER XIX.

BACKING OUT.

'YOU will dine with us to-night, Philip,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Now that we have settled our business, it will be quite fascinating to have a bright and cheerful evening together. We will take the crape off our heads and hearts. Lamb shall sing us some of his comic songs, and I will play you any music you like on the piano. You shall listen, and the *motif* of our entertainment shall be "Begone, dull care." I wish there were anyone invitable in this place, but there is not, and, moreover, though I do not care for the opinion of these barbarians, it is too soon after the funeral to have a dinner-party; we must mind the proprieties wherever we are.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was in good spirits. She had managed for herself well. The estate of Mr. Pennycomequick had been divided between herself and Philip, but as the business was already charged with her jointure, he deducted this from the total before dividing. She still retained her hold on the factory, remained as a sleeping partner in the firm, though, as Philip found to his cost before long, she was a sleeping partner given to walking in her sleep. Philip was to be the active member of the firm. It was by no means her wish that the mill should be sold and the business pass away, because it was prosperous. If it had fallen into Lambert's hands it would have been different, for she knew well that her son would have been incompetent to conduct it. She was cheerful now that all was concluded, perfectly satisfied with

herself, for the terms she had made with her nephew did not err on the side of generosity.

'And now,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I really do intend to get Lamb to insert a hyphen in his name, and spell the final syllable with a capital Q. I have ascertained from a really learned man that our name is most respectful, and, like all good names, is territorial. It is of ancient British origin, and means the Wick or settlement as the head of a Combe, that is a valley. When you know this you feel that it has an aristocratic flavour, and that is older than trade. I think that when written Pennycome-Quick it will have an air, Philip, an air of such exalted respectability as will entitle us to look on those who were entered on the Roll of Battle Abbey as parvenus. I intend to have Lamb's cards printed thus. I like the American way of combining the paternal name with that acquired at marriage. If I call myself Mrs. Pennycome-Quick-Sidebottom I flatter myself I shall carry weight.'

There is a characteristic of some persons, not so rare as might be supposed, but subdued in England as a token of ill-breeding, yet one which among foreigners, judging from our experience, is not forbidden by the social code. This characteristic is the sudden transformation of manner and behaviour at the touch of money. We meet with and enjoy ready hospitality, suavity of manner, that lasts till some difference arises about a coin, when all at once the graces we admired give place to roughness, a coarseness and greed quite out of proportion to the amount under dispute. In England we may feel aggrieved, but we strive to conceal our chagrin; not so the foreigner, who will fall into a paroxysm of fury over a sou or a kreutzer.

Mrs. Sidebottom was a lady of this calibre. Chatty, cordial with those who did not cross her, she was transformed, when her interests were touched, into a woman pugnacious, unscrupulous and greedy. A phenomenon observed in certain religious revivals is the

impatience of wearing clothes that takes those seized by spiritual frenzy. In the ecstasy of devotion or hysteria, they tear off their garments and scatter them on the ground. So, when Mrs. Sidebottom was possessed by the spirit of greed, she lost control over herself, she flung aside ordinary courtesy, divested herself of every shred of politeness, stripped off every affectation of disinterestedness, and showed herself in bald, unblushing rapacity. In dealing with Philip about the inheritance of Jeremiah, her masterful pursuit of her own advantage, her overbearing manner, her persistency, had gained for her notable advantages. She had used the privileges of her age, relationship, sex, to get the better of her nephew, and only when her ends were gained did she smilingly, without an apology, resume those trappings of culture and good breeding which she had flung aside.

Now that all was settled, as she supposed, she was again the woman of the world, and the agreeable, social companion.

'Yes, aunt,' said Philip, 'I am glad we have come to a settlement. If it be not all that I could have desired, it at all events leaves me vastly better off than I was before the death of my uncle. With the help of Providence, and a good heart, I trust that the respectable old house of Pennycomequick will maintain its character and thrive continuously.'

'You like trade,' said his aunt. 'Lambert never could have accustomed himself to it. By the way, there will be no necessity for you to change the spelling of your name.'

'I have not an intention to do so.'

'Right. Of course it is as well to keep on the name of the firm unaltered. With us, moving in a higher and better sphere, it is other.'

'There is one matter, aunt, that has not yet been definitely arranged, and that is the last about which I need trouble you.'

'What matter? I thought all was done.'

'That relative to Miss Cusworth.'

'What about Miss Cusworth?'

'You surely have not forgotten our compact.'

'Compact? Compact?'

'The agreement we came to that she was to receive acknowledgment from us.'

'Acknowledgment! Fiddlesticks!'

'I am sorry to have to refresh your memory,' said Philip harshly, 'but you may perhaps recall, now that I speak of it, that I threatened to enter a *caveat* against your taking out powers of administration, unless you agreed to my proposition that the young lady should be given the same sum as was invested for her sister, which was the least that Uncle Jeremiah intended to do for her.'

'Now—what nonsense, Philip! I never heard such stuff. I refused to listen to your proposal. I distinctly recall my words, and I can swear to them. I told you emphatically that nothing in the world would induce me to consent.'

'The threat I used did, however, dispose you to alter your note and yield.'

'My dear Philip,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, assuming an air of solemnity, 'I have taken out administrative authority and have administered, or am in the process of administering.'

'Exactly. You have acted, but you were only enabled to act because I held back from barring your way. You know that very well, aunt, and you know on what terms I withdrew my opposition. You accepted my terms, and I look to you to fulfil your part of the compact.'

'I do not find it in the bond,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I can quote Shakespeare. Come, Phil, I thought we had done with wrangling over sordid mammon. Let us enjoy ourselves. I did not ask you to stay for dinner that we might renew our disputes. The

tomahawk is buried and the calumet drawn forth.'

'It was a bond, not, indeed, drawn up in writing,' between us, because I relied on your honour.'

'My dear Phil, I gave no definite promise, but I had to swear before the man at the Probate Court that I would administer faithfully and justly according to law, and the law was plain. Not a word in it about Cusworths. I am in conscience bound to stand by my oath. I cannot forswear myself. If there is one thing in the world I pride myself on, it is my strict conscientiousness.'

'The cow that lows loudest yields least milk,' muttered Philip. He was greatly incensed. 'Aunt,' he said angrily, 'this is a quibble unworthy of you. A perfectly clear understanding was come to between us, by the terms of which you were to go halves with me in raising four or five thousand pounds to fund, or otherwise dispose of for the benefit of Miss Cusworth.'

'Four or five thousand fiddlesticks!'

'If I had opposed you,' said Philip grimly, 'some awkward questions might have been asked relative to the cancelled will.'

'What questions?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom, looking him straight in the face with defiance.

'As to how that will came to have the signature torn off.'

'They were perfectly welcome to ask that question, but I defy you to find anyone who could answer it.'

She was right, and Philip knew it. Whatever his suspicions might be, he was without a grain of evidence to substantiate an accusation against anyone. Moreover, much as he mistrusted his aunt, he could not bring himself to believe her capable of committing so daring and wicked an act.

'I wish that the old witch-drowning days were back,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'It is clear to me that Salome

has been exercising her fascinations upon you. Oh, that she could be pitched into a pool—that one of scalding water, swarming with gold-fish, would suit admirably, because of the colour of her hair. Then sink or swim would be all one—sink for innocence, swim for guilt—clear of her anyway.'

'Do you seriously mean to evade the arrangement come to between us?' asked Philip. He would not be drawn from his point to side issues.

'I never went into it.'

'I beg your pardon, you did agree to what I proposed.'

'Upon compulsion. No, were I at the strappado, or all the racks in the world, I would not yield on compulsion. There you have Shakspeare again, Phil. I wonder whether you can tell me from what play I quote. If you were a man of letters, you would cap my quotations.'

'There can be no question as to what were the intentions of Uncle Jeremiah.'

'Ah, there I agree with you. Having made a preposterous will, he tore it up, to show that he did not intend to constitute Salome his heiress.'

What was Philip to say? How bring his aunt to her terms of agreement? He remained silent, with closed lips and contracted brows.

'Now, look here, Philip,' said Mrs. Sidebottom good-humouredly, 'I have ordered shoulder of mutton and onion sauce: also quenilles of maccaroni and forced-meat, and marmalade pudding. Come and discuss these good things with us, instead of mauling these dry bones of business.'

'I have already spoken to Mrs. and Miss Cusworth. Relying on your word, I told them what we purposed doing for them.'

'Then you made a mistake, and must eat your words. What a pity it is, Philip, that we are continually floundering into errors of judgment, or acts

that our commonsense reproves, so that we come out scratched and full of thorns! You will be wiser in the future. Never make promises—that is, in money matters. If you persist in paying the hussy the four or five thousand pounds, I have no objection to the sum coming out of your own pocket. Excuse me, I must laugh, to think how you, a lawyer, have allowed yourself to be bitten.'

'I do not see how I am to pay the sum you mention without jeopardizing the business. I must have money in hand wherewith to carry it on. If you draw back——'

'There is no *if* in the case. I do draw back. Do me the justice to admit that I never rushed into it. You did, dazzled by the girl's eyes, drawn by her hair.'

Philip rose.

'What—are you going, Phil? Lamb will be here directly. He is at the White Hart, I believe, playing billiards. It is disgusting that he can find no proper gentlemen to play with, and no good players either. Come, sit down again. You are going to dine with us. Some of your uncle's old port and Amontillado sherry. It must be drunk—we shall hardly move it to York.'

'I cannot dine with you now.'

'Why not?'

'Under the circumstances I cannot,' he said coldly. 'I trusted to your honour—I trusted to you as a lady, and,' he raised his head, 'as a Pennycomequick——'

'How spelled?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom laughingly.

'I cannot sit down with you now, with my respect and confidence shaken. I trust that you have spoken in jest, and that to-morrow you will tell me so; but I am not fond of jokes—such jokes as these leave a scar. I could not accept my share of Uncle Jere-

miah's property without making recognition of the claims of the Cusworth family. The father died in my uncle's service; the mother and daughters have devoted themselves to making uncle's life easy—and now to be cast out! If you hold back, and refuse to pay your share of two thousand pounds, I must pay the entire amount; and if the business suffers, well, it suffers. The responsibility will be yours, and the loss yours also, in part.'

'Nonsense, Phil; you will not run any risk.'

'If you had taken your part, and I mine, we could have borne the loss easily; but if I have the whole thrown on me, the consequences may be serious. Ready money is as necessary as steam to make the mill run.'

'I don't believe—I cannot believe—that you, a man of reason—you, a man with legal training—can act such a quixotish part?' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, becoming for the moment alarmed. Then she calmed down again. 'I see through you, Philip,' she said. 'Having failed to persuade me, you seek to terrify me. It will not do. I do not believe so badly of humanity as to think that you will act so wickedly. Come, think no more of this. I hope you like sirloin?'

'I refuse to sit down with you,' said Philip angrily.

'Then go!' exclaimed his aunt, with an explosion of spleen. 'Go as an impracticable lout to your housekeeper's room, to sup on a bowl of gruel and cottage-pie!'

CHAPTER XX.

A FACE IN THE DARK.

MRS. SIDEBOTTOM was not at ease in her mind after the suggestion thrown out by Philip that the business might suffer if so much capital were suddenly with-

drawn from it. She recalled how it had been when her brother Nicholas had insisted on taking out of it his share—how angry Jeremiah had been; how, for awhile, the stability of the firm had been shaken, and how crippled it had been for some years. She remembered how that her share of the profits had been reduced, and she had no desire to meet with a recurrence of this shrinkage. When Nicholas made that great call on the resources of the firm, there was Jeremiah in the office, thoroughly experienced, and he was able, through his ability and knowledge, to pull through; but it was another matter now with Philip, a raw hand, in authority.

Then, again, Mrs. Sidebottom knew her brother Jeremiah had contemplated a large outlay in new and improved machinery. To keep up with the times, abreast with other competitors, it was necessary that this costly alteration should be made. But could it be done if four or five thousand pounds were sacrificed to a caprice?

'Philip is such a fool!' she muttered. 'He inherits some of his father's obstinacy, as well as his carelessness about money. Nicholas no sooner got money in his hands than he played ducks and drakes with it; and Philip is bent on doing the same. Four thousand pounds to that minx, Salome! There goes the church bell. When will Lamb be in?'

Mrs. Sidebottom lit a bedroom candle, and went upstairs to dress for dinner. Whilst ascending, she was immersed in thought, and suddenly an idea occurred to her which made her quicken her steps. Instead of dressing for dinner, she put on her bonnet. The church bell had diverted her thoughts into a new channel. When dressed to go out, she rang for the parlourmaid. 'Susan,' she said, 'I had forgotten. This is a holy day. I believe, I am morally certain, it is a saint's day, and appointed by the Church to make us holy. We must deny ourselves. So put off

dinner half an hour. I am going to church—to set an example.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was not an assiduous church-goer. She attended on Sundays to do the civil to the parson, but was rarely or never seen within the sacred walls on week days. Consequently her announcement to Susan, that she was about to assist at divine worship that evening, and that dinner was to be postponed accordingly, surprised the domestic and surprised and angered the cook, who did not object to unpunctuality in herself, but resented it in her master and mistress.

'If Salome is not at church,' said Mrs. Sidebottom to herself, 'I shall be taken with faintness; fan myself with my pocket-handkerchief, to let the congregation see I am poorly, and will come away at the *Nunc Dimittis*.'

But Mrs. Sidebottom tarried in church through the *Nunc Dimittis*, professed her adhesion to the Creed, and declared her transgressions. As she listened to the lessons, her mind reverted to the quenilles. 'They will be done to chips!' she sighed, and then forgetting herself, intoned, 'A—men.' At the prayers she thought of the shoulder of mutton, and in the hymn hovered in soul over the marmalade-pudding. Probably, if the hearts of other worshippers that evening had been revealed, they would not have been discovered more wrapped in devotion than that of Mrs. Sidebottom. In the life of St. Modwenna, Abbess of Stoke-on-Trent, we read that this holy woman had the faculty of seeing the prayers of her nuns dancing like midges under the choir roof; they could not pierce the vault, being deficient in the boring organ, which is true devotion. It is perhaps fortunate we have not the same gift. On that evening a row of tittering girls sought to attract the attention and engross the admiration of the choristers. Five young ladies, hating each other as rivals, sought by their

attendance to catch the curate, who was unmarried. Old Bankes was there, because he hoped to sell two bags of potatoes to the parson. Mary Saunders was there, because some unpleasant stories had circulated concerning her character, and she hoped to smother them by appearing at church on week days. Mr. Gruff was there, to find fault with the parson's conduct of the service, and Mrs. Tomkins attended to see who were present.

When the service was concluded, Mrs. Sidebottom came out of church beside Salome, who had been seated in front of her. She at once addressed her.

'My dear Miss Cusworth, how soothing it is to have week-day prayer. I have had so much of the world forced on me of late, that I felt I must for the good of my soul fly to the sanctuary.'

'There is always service on Thursday evening.'

'My goodness!—is this not a saint's day? I thought it was, and I have been so devout, too. You don't mean to tell me there is no special call for it?—and these saints—they are perfectly fascinating creatures.'

Mrs. Sidebottom could talk what she called 'goody' when there was need for it; she generally talked it when chance led her into a poor man's cottage. As children are given lollipops by their elders, so the poor, she thought, must be given 'goody talk' by their superiors. She put on her various suits of talk as occasion offered. She had her scandal suit and her pious suit, and her domestic-worry suit and her political suit—just like those picture-books children have, whose one face does for any number of transformation garments, and the same head figures now as a bronze, then as Nell Gwynne, as a Quakeress, or as a tight-rope dancer.

The author at one time knew a bedridden man who had two suits of conversation—the one profane, abusive, brutal, the other pious, sanctified, and seasoned with

salt. When his cottage-door was open, the passer heard some such exclamations as these as he approached, addressed to the wife: 'Now then, you —— toad!' Then a reference to her eyes best left unquoted. 'If I could only get at you, I'd skin you!' Then a change, 'Fotch me my Boible; O my soul, be joyful, raise the sacred hanthem! Bah! I thought 'twas the parson's step, and he'd give me a shilling! Now then, you gallopading kangaroo!' This, of course, was an extreme case, and Mrs. Sidebottom was far too well-bred to go to extremities.

'I was so glad you came in when you did,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I was really feeling somewhat faint. I feared I would have been forced to leave at the *Nunc Dimittis*, and I was just fanning myself with my handkerchief, on which was a drop of eau de Cologne, when you came in, and a whiff of cool air from the door revived me, so I was able to remain. I am so thankful! The hymn afforded me such elevating thoughts! I felt as if I had wings of angels, which I could spread, and upward fly!'

'I was late—I could not get away earlier.'

'And I am grateful to be able to walk back with you. You will allow me to take your arm. I am still shaken with my temporary faintness. I have, I fear, been overdone. I have had so much to try me of late. But when the bell rang, I was drawn towards the sacred building. Upon my word, I thought it was a saint's day, and it was a duty as well as a pleasure to be there. I am so glad I went; and now I am able to walk back with you, and after public worship—though the congregation was rather thin—the mind is turned to devotion, and the thoughts are framed, are, in fact, just what they ought to be, you know. I have wanted for some time to speak to you, and tell you how grieved I was that I was forced to give your mother notice to leave. I had no thought of being inconsiderate and unkind.'

'I am aware of that,' answered Salome quietly. 'Mr. Philip Pennycomequick has already told mamma that the notice was a mere formality. The explanation was a relief to us, as mamma was somewhat hurt. She had tried to do her best for dear Mr. Pennycomequick.'

'You will have to induce her to forgive me. What is religion for, and churches built, and organs, and hot-water apparatus, and all that sort of thing, but to cultivate in us the forgiving spirit. I am, myself, the most placable person in the world, and after singing such a hymn as that in which I have just joined, I could forgive Susan if she dropped the silver spoons on the floor and dinted them.'

No one would have been more astonished than Mrs. Sidebottom if told that she was artificial, that she affected interests, sympathies, to which she was strange. At the time that she talked she felt what she said, but the feeling followed the expression, did not originate it.

'My dear Miss Cusworth,' she went on, 'I am not one to bear a grudge. I never could. When my poor Sidebottom was alive, if there had been any unpleasantness between us during the day—and all married people have their tiffs—when you are married you will have tiffs. As I was saying, if there had been any unpleasantness between us, I have shaken him at night to wake him up, that he might receive my pardon for an incivility said or done.'

'We had made our preparations to leave Mergatroyd,' said Salome, 'but my mother has been ill again, and my poor sister has heard of the death of her husband, who fell in a skirmish with the Germans. So when Mr. Philip Pennycomequick was so kind as to ask my mother to *remain* on in the house, in the same capacity as heretofore, we were too thankful——'

'What! You stay?'

'Yes, my mother is not in a condition to move just now, and my sister is broken down with grief. But, of course, this is only a temporary arrangement.'

Mrs. Sidebottom said nothing for a moment. Presently, however, she observed: 'No doubt this is best, and I am very, very pleased to hear it. Philip did not mention it—I mean Mr. Pennycomequick. I must not any longer call him Philip, as he is now head of the family, unless the captain be regarded also as a head, then the family will be like the Austrian eagle—one body with two heads. But, my dear Miss Cusworth, tell me, did Mr. Pennycomequick say some foolish nonsense about three or four thousand pounds?'

'He mentioned something of the sort to mamma.'

'It is all fiddlesticks,' said Mrs. Sidebottom confidentially. 'He is the most inconsiderate and generous fellow in the world. His father was so before him. But it won't do. The mill will suffer, the business fall to the ground; we shall all go into the bankruptcy court. I respect the memory of my darling brother too highly to wish that the firm he managed should collapse like a house of cards. Philip is generous and all that sort of thing, and he will try to press money on you. You must not consent to receive it, for two reasons—first, because it would smash the whole concern, and next, because people would talk in a way you would not like about you. Do you understand—you could not receive a large allowance from a young unmarried man. However,' continued Mrs. Sidebottom, 'do not suppose I wish you to waive all expectations of getting anything. I ask you only to trust me. Lean on me and wait; I have your interests at heart as much as my own. I dare say you have heard my brother say he would be driven to adopt improved machinery?'

'Yes, I heard him say that.'

'Very well. My nephew, Philip, must reconstruct

the mechanism of the factory at the cost of several thousands. Now, my dear brother did not leave enough money to be used both on this and on satisfying your just claims. If you will wait, say till your marriage—then you may be sure I and my son and nephew will strain every nerve to make you comfortable.'

'Mrs. Sidebottom,' said Salome calmly, 'you are very kind. When Mr. Philip Pennycomequick made the request to my mother that she should stay in the house, she consented, but only temporarily, till he is settled, and has had time to look about him for someone who will be a more active housekeeper than my mother can be; and at the same time it will be a convenience to us, giving us breathing-time in which to recover from the shock of Mr. Albert Baynes' death, and consider in what manner my sister Janet's future will be tied up with our own. As for that other very generous offer—we had no time to give it a thought, as it came to us simultaneously with the crushing news from France.' Salome halted. 'You have passed your door, Mrs. Sidebottom.'

'Bless me! So I have—I was so interested in what you were saying, and so charmed with your noble sentiments. Can I persuade you to enter and dine with us—only shoulder of mutton, quenilles, and marmalade-pudding.'

Salome declined: she must return immediately to her mother.

'Why!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, 'bless my soul, here is my nephew come to meet us—I cannot, however, take the compliment as paid to me, for we have parted in dudgeon.'

Philip had left his aunt's house in boiling indignation. She had led him into a trap, from which escape was difficult. He felt himself in honour bound by the proposal he had made to Miss Cusworth; he could not withdraw from it, and yet at that time to have

to find the entire sum mentioned would severely embarrass him. He could not tell Salome that he had been precipitate in making the offer, and crave her indulgence to allow him to put off the fulfilment to a convenient season. The only way out of the difficulty that commended itself to him was to offer Salome an annual sum, charged on the profit of the mill, till such time as it suited her to withdraw her four thousand pounds and invest it elsewhere; in a word, to take her into partnership.

Having come to this decision, he resolved on preparing it for her acceptance at once, and he descended to the rooms occupied by the Cusworths, there to learn that she had gone to church. He at once took his hat and walked to meet her.

He was ill-pleased to see her returning with his aunt hanging on her arm; he mistrusted this exhibition of sudden affection in Mrs. Sidebottom for one whom he knew she disliked.

'You see, Philip,' said his aunt, 'I thought it was a saint's day, and the saints want encouragement; so I went to the parish church. I put dinner off—now can I induce you and Miss Cusworth to come in and pick a little meat with me?—not bones, Philip, these we have pulled already together. I was taken with a little faintness in church, and Miss Cusworth has kindly lent me support on my way home.'

The little group stood near the doorstep to the house occupied by Mrs. Sidebottom. A gaslight was at the edge of the footway, a few paces lower down the road. Mrs. Sidebottom disengaged her hand from the arm of Salome—then the girl started, shrank back, and uttered an exclamation of terror.

'What is the matter?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom.

'I have seen it again,' said the girl, in a low tone.

'Seen what?' asked the lady.

'Never mind what,' interrupted Philip, divining immediately from Salome's alarm and agitation what

she meant. 'We must not keep my aunt waiting in the street. The ground is damp and the wind cold. Good-night, Aunt Louisa. I will escort Miss Cusworth home.'

When Philip was alone with Salome, he said: 'What was it?—what did you see?'

'I saw that same man, standing by the lamp-post, looking at us. He wore *his* hat and overcoat. Again I was unable to see any face, because the strong light fell from above, and it was in shadow. You had your back to the lamp, and the figure was in your rear. When you turned—it was gone.'

CHAPTER XXI.

HYACINTH BULBS.

THE figure seen in the dark had diverted Philip from his purpose of speaking to Salome about money. He was not particularly eager to make his proposal, because that proposition had in it a smack of evasion of an offer already made; as though he had speedily repented of the liberality of the first. In this there was some moral cowardice, such as is found in all but blunt natures, and induces them to catch at excuses for deferring an unpleasant duty. There exists a wide gulf between two sorts of persons—the one shrinks and shivers at the obligations to say or do anything that may pain another; the other rushes at the chance with avidity, like a hornet impatient to sting. On this occasion Philip had a real excuse for postponing what he had come out to say, for Salome was not in a frame of mind to attend to it; she was alarmed and bewildered by this second encounter with a man whose face she had not seen, and who was so mysterious in his proceedings.

Accordingly Philip went to bed that night without

having discharged the unpleasant task, and with the burden still weighing on him.

Next day, when he returned from the factory, in ascending the stairs he met Salome descending with her hands full of hyacinth glasses, purple, yellow and green, and a pair tucked under her arms.

She smiled recognition, and the faintest tinge of colour mounted to her face. Her foot halted, held suspended for a moment on the step, and Philip flattered himself that she desired to speak to him, yet lacked the courage to address him.

Accordingly he spoke first, volunteering his assistance.

'Oh, thank you,' she replied, 'I am merely taking the glasses and bulbs to the Pummy cupboard again.'

'Thank you in English is the equivalent for *s'il vous plait* and not of *merci*,' he said, 'so I shall carry some of the glasses. But—what is the Pummy cupboard?'

'You do not know the names of the nooks and corners of your own house,' said Salome, laughing. 'My sister and I gave foolish names to different rooms and closets when we were children, and they have retained them, or we have not altered them. I had put the bulbs in a closet under the staircase till we thought of changing quarters, and then I removed them so as to pack them. It was whilst I was thus engaged that I saw that strange, inexplicable figure for the first time. Now that I know we are to remain here, I have put them in glasses to taste water, and am replacing them in the dark, in the cupboard.'

'Have you many?'

'A couple of dozen named bulbs, all good.'

'I will help you to carry down the glasses and roots. Where are they?'

'In the drawing-room. We kept the glasses there all summer in the chiffonnier.'

'I hope you will be able to spare me one or two for my study.'

'Of course you shall have a supply in your window. They were procured partly for Mr. Pennycomequick and partly for my mother.'

'You say "of course"; but I do not see the force of the words. Remember I have had a lodging-house experience; my sense of the fitness of things is framed on that model, and my landlady never said "of course" to anything I suggested which would give me pleasure, but cost her some trouble. I am like Kaspar Hauser, of whom you may have heard; he was brought up in a solitary dark cell, and denied everything, except bare necessaries; when he escaped and came among men, he had no notion how to behave, and was lost in amazement to find they were not all gaolers. I had on my chimney-piece two horrible sprigs of artificial flowers, originally from a bridecake, that from length of existence and accumulation of soot were become so odious that at last I burnt them. The landlady made me pay for them as though they were choice orchids.'

'You must not make me laugh,' said Salome, 'or I shall drop the glasses from under my arms.'

'Then let me take them,' said Philip promptly; 'you have two in your hands, that suffices. I tire you with my reminiscences of lodging-house life?'

'Not at all—they divert me.'

'It is the only subject on which my conversation flows. I do not know why it is that when I speak on politics I have a difficulty in expressing my ideas, but when I come on landlady-dom, the words boil out of my heart, like the water from a newly-tapped artesian well. I have a great mind to tell you my Scarborough experiences.'

'Do so.'

'Once when I was out of sorts I went to the sea-coast for a change—but I am detaining you.'

'Well, I will put down the glasses and bulbs in the Pummy cupboard and return to hear your story.'

Instead of going downstairs with Salome, Philip,

though he had relieved her of two glasses, went with them to the drawing-room, whence she had taken them—which was in no way assisting her. Moreover, when he was there, he put down the glasses on the table and began examining the names of the bulbs—double pink blush, single china blue, the queen of the yellows, and so on. He had offered to help Salome, but he was doing nothing of the kind; he waited till she had filled the glasses with water, planted a couple of bulbs in them, and consigned them to the depths of the cupboard. When she returned to the parlour, he was still examining the names of the tubers.

'Now,' said he, 'I will tell you about my landlady at Scarborough.' He made no attempt to carry down glasses, he detained the girl from prosecuting her work. 'I was at Scarborough for a week, and when I left my lodgings the landlady charged me thirty shillings for a toilet set, because there was a crack in the soap-dish. I had not injured it. I pointed out the fact that the crack was gray with age, that the discolouration betokened antiquity; but she was inaccessible to reason, impossible to convince. The injury done to the soap-dish spoiled the whole set, she said, and I must pay for an entire set. I might have contested the point at law; but it was hardly worth my while, so I agreed to pay the thirty shillings, only I stipulated that I should carry off the fractured soap-dish with me. Then she resisted; the soap-dish, she argued, could be of no use to me. I must leave it, and at last, when I persisted in my resolve, she let me off with a couple of shillings.'

'But why?'

'Because the cracked soap-dish was to her a source of revenue. Every lodger for years had been bled on account of that crack to the tune of thirty shillings, and that cracked soap-dish was worth many pounds per annum to that wretched woman.' Then, with a sudden tightening of the muscles at the corners of his

mouth, he added, 'I know their tricks and their ways! I have been brought up among landladies, as Romulus was nursed by a wolf, and Jupiter was reared among goats.'

'I suppose there are good lodging-house keepers as well as bad ones,' said Salome, laughing.

'Charity hopeth all things,' answered Philip grimly, 'but I never came across one. Just as colliers acquire a peculiar stoop and walk, and horse-dealers a special twist in conscience, and sailors a peculiar waddle, engendered by their professions, so does lodging-house keeping produce a warp and crick and callousness in women with which they were not born. You do not know what it is, you cannot know what it is, to be brought up and to form one's opinions among landladies. It forces one to see the world, to contemplate life through their medium as through lenses that break and distort all rays. Do you recall what the King of Israel said when the King of Syria sent to him Naaman to be healed of his leprosy?'

'Yes,' answered Salome, '"See how he seeketh a quarrel against me."'

'Exactly. And those who live in furnished lodgings are kept continually in the King of Israel's frame of mind. Whatever the landlady does, whatever she leaves undone, when she rolls her eyes round the room, when she sweeps with them the carpet, one is always saying to one's self, see how this woman seeketh a quarrel against me. Landladies are the cantharides of our nineteenth century civilization, the great source of blister and irritation. Even a man of means, who has not to count his shillings, must feel his wretchedness in lodgings; but consider the apprehensions, the unrest that must possess a man, pinched in his circumstances who lives among landladies. Her eye,' continued Philip, who had warmed to his subject, 'is ever searching for spots on the carpet, fraying of sofa edges, tears in the curtains, scratches in the

mahogany, chips in the marble mantelpiece. I think it was among Quarles' emblems that I saw a picture of man's career among traps and snares on every side. In lodgings every article of furniture is a gin ready to snap on you if you use it.'

Then Philip took up two hyacinth glasses, one yellow, the other blue, but put down that which was blue, and took up another that was yellow, not for æsthetic predilection, but to prolong the time. It was a real relief to him to unburden his memory of its gall, to go through his recollections, like a Jew on the Paschal preparation, searching for and casting out every scrap of sour leaven.

'I dare say you are wondering, Miss Cusworth,' he said, 'to what this preamble on landladies is leading.'

Salome looked amused and puzzled; so perhaps is the reader.

Philip had been, as he said, for so many years in furnished lodgings, and had for so many years had before his eyes nothing but a prospect of spending all his days in them, and of expiring in the arms of lodging-house keepers, that he had come to loathe the life. Now that his financial position was altered, and before him opened a career unhampered and unsoured by pecuniary difficulties, a desire woke up in him to enjoy a more cheerful, social life than that of his experience. Now the difference between the days in his uncle's house at Mergatroyd and those he had spent in lodgings at Nottingham did not differ radically. It was true that he no longer had the tongue of a landlady hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles, but his day was no brighter, quite as colourless.

He was beneath the same roof with an old lady who belonged, as his suspicious eye told him, to the same clay as that out of which the landlady is modelled, only circumstances had not developed in her

the pugnacity and acridity of the class. In herself, she was an uninteresting person, whom only the love and respect of her daughters could invest with any favour. But those daughters were both charming. His prejudice against Salome was gone completely, that against Janet almost gone. As his suspicions of Salome left, his dislike of Janet faded simultaneously. He had conceived a mistrust of Salome because he had conceived an aversion against Janet; now that he began to like Salome, this liking influenced his regard for the sister.

The society of his aunt was no gain to Philip. He disapproved of her lack of principle and disliked her selfishness. The tone of her mind and talk were repugnant to him, and Lambert and he would never become friends, because the cement of common interests was lacking.

Philip discovered himself not infrequently during the day looking at the office clock, and wishing that worktime were over; not that he wearied of his work, but that he was impatient to be home and have a chance of a word with Salome. When he returned from the factory, if he did not meet her in the hall, or on the stairs, or see her in the garden, he was disappointed. It was remarkable how many wants he discovered that necessitated a descent to Mrs. Cusworth's apartments, and how, when he entered and found that one of the daughters was present, his visit was prolonged, and the conversation was not confined to his immediate necessity. If on his entering, the tea-table was covered, he was easily persuaded to remain for a cup. His reserve, his coldness, did not wholly desert him, except when he was alone with Salome, when her freshness and frankness exercised on him a relaxing fascination; all his restraint fell away at once, and he became natural, talkative, and cheerful.

'The fact of the matter is,' said Philip, 'I have

been lifting the veil to you that covers furnished lodging-house life, and exposing my wretchedness to enlist your sympathy because I am about to ask a considerable favour.'

'I am sure we need no persuasion to do what we can for you.'

'It is this. If your mother would not object, I should like to have my meals with you all, just as my uncle was wont. Having everything served in my room recalls my past with too great intensity. I have heard of a prisoner who had spent many years in the Bastille, that in after-life, when free, he could not endure to hear the clink of fireirons. It recalled to him his chains. If there be things at which my soul revolts it is steak, chops, cutlets.'

'Oh! it would indeed be a pleasure to us—such a pleasure!' and Salome's face told Philip that what she spoke she felt; the colour deepened in her cheeks, and the dimples formed at the corners of her mouth. 'And now,' she said, still with the smile on her face, playing about her lips; 'and now, Mr. Pennycome-quick, you will not be angry if I ask you a favour.'

'I angry!'

'Must I enlist your sympathy first of all, and inveigle you into promising before you know what the request is I am about to make? I might tell you that a young girl like me has a little absurd pride in her, and that it is generous of a man to respect it, let it stand, and not knock it over.'

'What is the favour? I am too cautious—have been too long in a lawyer's office to undertake anything the particulars and nature of which I do not know.'

'It is this, Mr. Pennycomequick. I want you not to say another word about your kind and liberal offer to me. I will not accept it, not on any account, because I have no right to it. So that is granted.'

'Miss Cusworth, I will not hear of this.' Philip's

face darkened, though not a muscle moved. 'Why do you ask this of me? What is the meaning of your refusal?'

'I will not take that to which I have no right,' she replied firmly.

'You have a right,' answered Philip, somewhat sharply. 'You know as well as I do that my uncle intended to provide for you, at least as he did for Mrs. Baynes. It was not his wish that you should be left without proper provision.'

'I know nothing of the sort. What he put into my hands was merely an evidence that he had at one time purposed to do an unfair thing, and that he repented of it in time.'

'Miss Cusworth, that cancelled will still remains to me a mystery, and I do not see how I shall ever come to an understanding of how it was that the signature was gone. From your account my uncle——'

'Never mind going over that question again. As you say, an understanding of the mystery will never be reached. Allow it to remain unattempted. I am content.'

'But, Miss Cusworth, we do not offer you a handsome, but a moderate provision.'

'You cannot force me to take what I refuse to receive. Who was that king to whom molten gold was offered? He shut his teeth against the draught. So do I. I clench mine and you cannot force them open.'

'What is the meaning of this? Why do you refuse to have my uncle's wishes carried out? You put us in an invidious position.'

Salome had shut her mouth. She shook her head. The pretty dimples were in her cheeks. Her colour had deepened.

'Someone has been talking to you,' said Philip. 'I know there has. Who was it?'

Salome again shook her head, with a provoking

smile dappling and dimpling her face; but seeing that Philip was seriously annoyed, it faded, and she broke silence.

'There is a real favour you can do us, Mr. Pennycomequick, if you will.'

'What is that?' asked Philip. His ease and cheerfulness were gone. He was angry, for he was convinced that Mrs. Sidebottom had said something to the girl which had induced her to refuse the offer.

'It is this—mamma had all her money matters managed for her by dear Mr. Pennycomequick. She did not consult us about them, and we knew and know nothing about her property. I do not know how much she has, and in what investment it is. She did not, I believe, understand much about these affairs herself, she trusted all to the management of Mr. Pennycomequick. He was so clever, so kind, and he did everything for her without giving her trouble. But now that he is gone, I fancy she is worried and bewildered about these things. She does not understand them, and she has been fretting recently because she supposes that she has encountered a great loss. But that is impossible. She has touched nothing since Mr. Pennycomequick died, and what he had invested for her must certainly have been invested securely. It is not conceivable that she has lost since his death. I have been puzzling my head about the matter, and I suspect that some of her vouchers have got among Mr. Pennycomequick's papers, and she fancies they are lost to her. It is of course possible, as he kept the management of her little moneys, that some of her securities may have been taken with his. If you would kindly look into this matter for her, I am sure she will be thankful, and so—without saying—will I. If you can disabuse her mind of the idea that she has met with heavy losses, you will relieve her of a great, haunting trouble.'

'I will do this cheerfully. But this does not affect the obligation——'

'My teeth are set again. But—see! you offered to carry down my glasses, and you have not done so. You have, moreover, hindered me in my work.'

The house-door bell was rung.

'My aunt,' muttered Philip. 'I know the touch of her hand on knocker or bell-pull. I am beginning to entertain towards her some of the feelings I had towards my landladies in the old unregenerate lodging-house days. Confound her! Why should she come now?'

CHAPTER XXII.

YES OR NO?

PHILIP was right. He had recognised the ring of Mrs. Sidebottom. As soon as the door was opened her voice was audible, and Philip used a strong expression, which only wanted raising another stage to convert it into an oath.

Salome caught up a couple of hyacinth glasses and resumed her interrupted occupation; and Philip went to the window to remove a spring-nail that incommoded him. There are certain voices which, when coming unexpectedly on the ear, make the conscience feel guilty, though it may be free from fault. Such was that of Mrs. Sidebottom. If Philip had been studying his Bible instead of talking to Salome, when he heard her, he would have felt as though he had been caught reading an improper French novel; and if Salome had been engaged in making preserves in the kitchen, she would have been conscious of inner horror and remorse as though she had been concocting poison. The reason of this is that those who hear the voice know that the owner of the voice is certain, whatever they do, to believe them to be guilty of

some impropriety; and they are frightened, not at what they have done, but at what they may be supposed to have done.

'I suppose that Mr. Pennycomequick is in his room,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, passing on, to the servant who had admitted her. 'It is not his time to be at the office.'

She ascended the stairs to the study door, and in so doing passed Salome, who bowed, and was not sorry to be unable to respond to the proffered hand, having both of her own engaged, carrying glasses.

Philip heard his aunt enter the study, after a premonitory rap, and remained where he was, hoping that as she did not find him in his room she would conclude he was out, and retire. But Mrs. Sidebottom was not a person to be evaded thus; and after having looked round the room and called at his bedroom door, she came out on the landing and entered the drawing-room, when she discovered him, penknife in hand, removing his spring-nail.

'Oh!' she said, with an eye on the bulbs and flower-glasses. 'Adam and Eve in Paradise.'

'To whom entered the mischief-maker,' said Philip, promptly turning upon her.

'Not complimentary, Philip.'

'You brought it on yourself.'

'It takes two to pick a quarrel,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'and I am in the most amiable mood to-day. By the way, you might have inquired about my health this morning, for you knew I was not well yesterday. As you had not the grace to do so, I have come to announce to you that I am better.'

'I did not suppose that you had been seriously ill.'

'Not seriously ill, but indisposed. I nearly fainted in church last night, as I told you; but you were otherwise occupied than in listening to me. Now, I want to know, Philip, what was that rigmarole about something or someone seen in the dark?'

'There was no rigmarole, as you call it.'

'Oh! do not pick faults in my language. You know what I mean. What was the excuse made by Miss Cusworth for taking your arm?'

'Miss Cusworth did not take my arm.'

'Because you had not the wit to offer it; and yet the hint given was broad enough.'

'I am busy,' said Philip, in a tone of exasperation. His aunt's manner angered him, so that he could not speak or act with courtesy towards her.

'Oh yes. Busy planting forget-me-not and love in a mist. Come, do not be cross. What was the meaning of that exclamation? I want to know, for I also saw someone standing by the lamp-post, looking on.'

'I will tell you, and then, perhaps, you will be satisfied, Aunt Louisa. And when satisfied, I trust you will no longer detain me from my business.'

Then Philip shortly and plainly narrated to his aunt what had happened. He did so because he thought it possible, just possible, that she might be able to explain the apparition.

She was surprised and disconcerted by what she heard, but not for long.

'Who has the garden key?' she inquired.

'My uncle had one on his bunch.'

'And that bunch is in your possession?'

'Yes, and has not been out of it. It is locked up in my bureau.'

'Very well, then, the fellow did not get in by that means. Had anyone else a key?'

'Yes, Mrs. Cusworth.'

'And is there a third?'

'No; that is all.'

'Where was Mrs. Cusworth's key on the night in question?'

'I did not inquire. It was unnecessary.'

'Not at all unnecessary. If the man did not obtain

access by your key, he did that of by the housekeeper.'

'This is preposterous,' said Philip irritably. 'You have made no allowance for another contingency—that the door may have been left unlocked and ajar by the gardener, when last at work.'

'That will not do. The gardener has not been about the place for a fortnight or three weeks. You say that the servants may have allowed a friend to take the pick of Jeremiah's clothes. That explains nothing: for it does not account for the garden door being unlocked, though it might for the house door being left open. Why should not the Cusworths have needy relatives and hangers-on as well as the servant girls? Needy relatives smelling of beer, with patched small clothes and pimply faces, who fly about with the bats, and to whom the cast-off clothing, the good hat and warm overcoat, would be a boon. Who are these Cusworths? Whence have they come? Out of as great an uncertainty as this mysterious figure. They are creations out of nothing, like the universe, but not, like it, to be pronounced very good. Now, Philip, is not my solution of the riddle the only logical one?'

'This is enough on the subject,' said Philip, especially chafed because his aunt's explanation really was the simplest, and yet was one which he was unwilling to allow. 'You charge high-minded, honourable people with——'

'I charge them with doing no harm,' interrupted Mrs. Sidebottom. 'The clothes were laid out to be distributed to the needy; and Mrs. Cusworth was given the disposal of them. If she chose to favour a relative, who is to blame her? Not I. She would probably not care to have the sort of relative who would touch his cap for Jeremiah's old suits, come openly to the door in the blaze of day, and before the eyes of the giggling maids. No doubt she said to the moulting relative, "Come in the dark; help yourself

to new plumage, but do not discredit us by proclaiming kinship."'

Philip was too angry to answer his aunt. To change the subject he said, 'Miss Cusworth has refused to receive anything from us. That some influence has been brought to bear on her to induce this, I have no doubt, and I have as little doubt as to whose influence was exerted.' He looked fixedly at his aunt.

'I am glad she has had the grace to do so,' answered Mrs. Sidebottom cheerily. 'No, Philip, you need not drive your eyes into me, as if they were bradawls. I can quite understand that she has told you all, and laid the blame on me. I do not deny my part in the transaction. I am not ashamed of it; on the contrary, I glory in it. You were on the threshold of a great folly, that jeopardized the firm of Pennycomequick, and my allowance out of it as well. I have stepped in to stop you. I had my own interests to look after. I have saved you four thousand pounds, which you could not afford to lose. Am not I an aunt whose favour is worth cultivating; an aunt who deserves to be treated with elementary politeness?'

Then Philip's anger boiled up.

'We see everything through opposite ends of the telescope. What is infinitely small to me and far away, is to you present and immense; and what to me is close at hand and overwhelming, is quite beyond your horizon. To my view of things we are committing a moral wrong when technically right. How that will was cancelled, and by whom, will probably never be known; but nothing in the world will persuade me that Uncle Jeremiah swung from one extremity of liberality to Miss Cusworth, coupled with injustice to us, to the other extreme of generosity to us and absolute neglect of her. Such a thing could not be. He would turn in his grave if he thought that she, an innocent, defenceless girl, was to be left

in this heartless, criminal manner, without a penny in the world, contrary to his wishes.'

'Why did he not make another will, if he wished it so much?'

'Upon my word,' said Philip angrily, 'I would give up my share readily to have Uncle Jeremiah back, and know the rights of the matter of the will.' He stood looking at his aunt with eyes that were full of anger, and the arteries in his temples dark and swollen. 'I shall take care,' he said, 'that she is not defrauded of what is her due.'

Then he left the room, and slung the door after him with violence, and certainly with discourtesy. Never before had he lost his self-control as he had lost it in Mrs. Sidebottom's presence on this occasion, but before he had reached the foot of the staircase he had recovered his cold and formal manner.

As he saw Salome come from the cupboard where she was arranging the hyacinths, he bade her in an imperious manner attend him into the breakfast-room, and she obeyed readily, supposing he had some domestic order to give.

'Shut the door, please,' he said. The anger raised by Mrs. Sidebottom affected his address and behaviour to Salome. A sea that has been lashed into fury beats indiscriminately against every object, rock or sand-bank. He stationed himself with his back to the window, and signed to the girl to face him.

'Miss Cusworth,' he said, putting his hands behind him, as though he were standing before the hearth and not at a window, 'my aunt has imposed on your ignorance, has taken a wicked advantage of your generosity, in persuading you to decline the offer that was made you.'

'I decline it from personal motives, uninfluenced by her.'

'Do you mean to tell me she has not been meddling in the matter? I know better.'

'I do not deny that she spoke to me yesterday, but her words did not prompt, they only served to confirm the resolution already arrived at.'

'But I will not allow you to refuse. You shall have the money.'

'I never withdraw a word once given,' said Salome, with equal decision.

'Then you shall take a share in the mill—be a partner.'

'I cannot,' she said hastily, with a rush of colour. 'Indeed this is impossible.'

'Why so?'

'It cannot be. I will not go back from my word.'

'I have my conscience, that speaks imperiously,' said Philip. 'I cannot, I will not be driven by your obstinacy to act dishonourably, unjustly.'

Salome said nothing. She was startled by his vehemence, by his roughness of manner, so unlike what she had experienced from him.

'Very well,' said he hurriedly. 'You shall take me, and with me my share of the mill, and so satisfy every scruple. That, I trust, will content you as it does me.'

The girl was frightened, and looked up suddenly to see if he meant what he said. His back was toward the window. Had he occupied a reverse position she would have seen that his eyes were not kindled with the glow of love, that he spoke in anger, and to satisfy his conscience, not because he had made up his mind that she, Salome, was the only woman that could make him happy.

The Rabbis say that the first man was made male-female, and was parted asunder, and that the perfect man is only to be found in the union of the two severed halves. So each half wanders about the world seeking its mate, and gets attached to wrong halves, and this is the occasion of much misery; only where the right organic sections coalesce is there perfect harmony.

It did not seem as if Philip and Salome were the two halves gravitating towards each other, for the attraction was small, and the thrust together came from without—was due, in fact, to the uninviting hand of Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Come,' said he, 'I wait for an answer. I see no other way of getting out of our difficulties. What I now propose will assure to you and your mother a right in this house, and Mrs. Sidebottom will be able to obtain admission only by your permission. Do you see? I cannot, without a moral wound and breakdown of my self-respect, accept a share of the mill without indemnifying you, according to what I believe to have been the intentions of my uncle. You refuse to take anything to which you have not a right. Accept me, and you have all that has fallen to me.'

Certainly Philip's proposal was not made in a tender manner. He probably perceived that it was unusual and inappropriate, for he added in a quieter tone, 'Rely on it, that I will do my utmost to make you happy; and I believe firmly that with you at my side my happiness will be complete. I am a strictly conscientious man, and I will conscientiously give you all the love, respect, and forbearance that a wife has a right to demand.'

'You must give me time to consider,' said Salome timidly.

'Not ten minutes,' answered Philip hastily. 'I want an answer at once. That woman upstairs—I mean my aunt—I—I particularly wish to knock her down with the news that she is checkmated.'

Again Salome looked up at him, trying to form her decision by his face, by the expression of his eyes, but she could not see whether real love streamed out of them such as certainly did not find utterance by the tongue.

Her heart was beating fast. Did she love him? She liked him. She looked up to him. Some of the old

regard which had been lavished on the uncle devolved on Philip with the inheritance, as his by right, as the representative of the house. Salome had been accustomed all her life to have recourse to old Mr. Pennycomequick in all doubt, in every trouble to look to him as a guide, to lean on him as a stay, to fly to him as a protector. And now that she was friendless she felt the need of someone, strong, trustworthy and kind, to whom she could have recourse as she had of old to Mr. Pennycomequick. Mrs. Sidebottom had been hostile, but Philip had been friendly. Salome recognised in him a scrupulously upright mind, and with a girlish ignorance of realities, invested him with a halo of goodness and heroism, which were not his due. There was in him considerable self-reliance; he was not a vain, a conceited man; but he was a man who knew his own mind and resolutely held to his opinion—that Salome saw, or believed she saw; and female weakness is always inclined to be attracted by strength.

Moreover, her sister Janet had been strong in expressing her disapproval of Philip, her dislike of his formal ways, his wooden manner, his want of that ease and polish which she had come in France to exact of every man as essential. Salome had combated the ridicule, the detraction, with which her sister spoke of Philip, and had become his champion in her little family circle.

'I think—I really think,' said Salome, 'that you must give me time to consider what you have said.' She moved to leave the room.

'No,' answered he, 'you shall not go. I must have my answer in a Yes or a No, at once. Come, give me your hand.'

She hesitated. It was a little wanting in consideration for her, thus to press for an immediate answer. He had promised to show her the forbearance due to a wife, he was hardly showing her that due to a girl at the

most critical moment of her life. She stood steeped in thought, and alternate flushes of colour and pauses of pallor showed the changes of feeling in her heart.

Philip so far respected her hesitation that he kept silence, but he was not inclined to suffer the hesitation to continue long.

Love, Philip had never felt, nor had Salome; but Philip was conscious of pleasure in the society of the girl, of feeling an interest in her such as he entertained for no one else. He respected and admired her. He was aware that she exerted over him a softening, humanizing influence, such as was exercised over him by no one else.

Presently, doubtfully, as if she were putting forth her fingers to touch what might scorch her, Salome extended her right hand.

'Is that yes?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'And,' said he, 'I have your assurance that you never go back from your word. Now,' there recurred to his mind at that moment his aunt's sneer about his lack of wit in not offering Salome his arm; 'and now,' he said, 'let us go together and tell my aunt that you take all my share, along with me. Let me offer you—my arm.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

EARLE SCHOFIELD.

PHILIP PENNYCOMEQUICK entered the hall, with Salome on his arm, but she instantly disengaged her hand as she saw Mrs. Sidebottom, and was conscious that there was something grotesque in her appearance hooked on to Philip.

As to Philip, he had been so long exposed to the petrifying drip of legal routine, unrelieved by any

softening influences, that he was rapidly approaching fossilization.

A bird's wing, a harebell, left to the uncounteracted effect of silex in suspense, in time becomes stone, and the drudgery of office and the sordid experience of lodging-house life had encrusted Philip, and stiffened him in mind and manner. He had the feelings of a gentleman, but none of that ease which springs out of social intercourse; because he had been excluded from intercourse with those of his class, men and women, through the pecuniary straits in which his father had been for many years.

When, therefore, Philip proposed to Salome, he knew no better than to offer her his arm, as if to conduct her to dinner, or convey her through a crowd from the opera.

If he had been told that it was proper for him to kiss his betrothed, he would have looked in the glass and called for shaving-water, to make sure that his chin and lip were smooth before delivering the salute etiquette exacted.

The silicious drip had, as already said, encrusted Philip, but he had not been sufficiently long exposed to it to have his heart petrified.

Many clerks in offices keep fresh and green in spite of the formality of business, because they have in their homes everything necessary for counteracting the hardening influence, or they associate with each other and run out in mild Bohemianism.

Philip's father had existed, not lived, in lodgings, changing them periodically, as he quarrelled with his landlady, or the landlady quarrelled with him. Mr. Nicholas Pennycomequick had been a grumbler, cynical, finding fault with everything and every person with which and with whom he came in contact, as is the manner of those who have failed in life. Such men invariably regard the world of men as in league to insult and annoy them; it never occurs

to them to seek the cause of their failure in themselves.

Philip had met with no love, none of the emollient elements which constitute home. He belonged, or thought he belonged, socially and intellectually, to a class superior to that from which his fellow-clerks were drawn. The reverses from which his father had suffered had made Philip proud, and had restrained him from association with the other young men. Thrown on himself, he had become self-contained, rigid in his views, his manners, and stiff in his movements. When he offered his arm to Salome, she did not like to appear ungracious and decline it. She touched it lightly, and readily withdrew her hand, as she encountered the eye of Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Oh!' said that lady, 'I was only premature, Philip, in saying that your arm was taken last night.'

'Only premature,' replied Philip; 'I have persuaded Miss Cusworth out of that opinion which you forced on her when you took her arm.'

'She is, perhaps, easily persuaded,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, with a toss of her head.

'I have induced her to agree to enter into partnership.'

'How? I do not understand. Is the firm to be in future Pennycomequick and Co.—the Co. to stand for Cusworth?'

'You ask how,' said Philip. 'I reply, as my wife.'

He allowed his aunt a minute to digest the information, and then added:

'I am unable to ask you to stay longer at present, as I must inform Mrs. Cusworth of the engagement.'

'Let me tender my congratulations,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'and let me recommend a new lock on the garden-door, lest And Co. should bring in through it a train of rapacious out-at-elbow relatives, who would hardly be satisfied with a great-coat and a hat.'

Philip was too incensed to answer. He allowed his aunt to open the front-door unassisted.

When she was gone, he said to Salome:

'I am not in a humour to see your mother now. Besides, it is advisable, for her sake, that the news should be told her through you. I am so angry with that insolent—I mean with Mrs. Sidebottom, that I might frighten your mother. I will come later.'

He left Salome and mounted to his study, where he paced up and down, endeavouring to recover his composure, doubly shaken by his precipitation in offering marriage without premeditation, and by his aunt's sneer. He had been surprised into taking the most important step in life, without having given a thought to it before. He was astonished at himself, that he, schooled as he had been, should have acted without consideration on an impulse. He had been carried away, not by the passion of love, but of anger.

In the story of the Frog-Prince, the faithful Eckhard fastened three iron bands round his heart to prevent it from bursting with sorrow when his master was transformed into a loathsome frog. When, however, the Prince recovered his human form, then the three iron bands snapped in succession. One hoop after another of hard constraint had been welded about the heart of Philip, and now, in a sudden explosion of wrath, all had given way like tow.

When Philip was alone, and had cooled, he became fully aware of the gravity of his act; and, as a natural result, a reaction set in.

He knew little of Salome, nothing of her parentage; and though he laid no store on pedigree, he was keenly aware that a union with one who had, or might have, objectionable and impecunious relatives, as difficult to drive away as horseflies, might subject him to much annoyance.

In a manufacturing district, little is thought of a

man's ancestors so long as he is himself respectable and his pockets are full. Those who begin life as millhands often end it as millheads, and the richest men are sometimes the poorest in social qualifications.

Mrs. Sidebottom, with feminine shrewdness and malice, had touched Philip where she knew he would feel the touch and would wince. She had put her finger at once on the weak point of the situation he was creating for himself.

Philip was vexed at his own weakness; as vexed as he was surprised. He could not charge Salome with having laid a trap for him, nevertheless he felt as if he had fallen into one. He had sufficient consciousness of the course he had taken to be aware that Mrs. Sidebottom had given the impetus which had shot him, unprepared, into an engagement. He certainly liked Salome. There was not a girl he knew whom he esteemed more highly. He respected her for her moral worth, and admired her for her beauty. She was not endowed with wealth by fortune, and yet, if she came to him, she would not come poor, for she was jointured with the four thousand pounds which he had undertaken to set apart for her.

That he could be happy with Salome he did not question; but he was not partial to her mother, whom he regarded, not as a vulgar, but as an ordinary woman. She had not the refinement of Salome, nor the vivacity of Janet. How two such charming girls should have been turned out from such a mould as Mrs. Cusworth was a marvel to Philip; but then it is precisely the same enigma that all charming girls present to young men who look at them, and then at their mothers, and cannot believe that these girls will in time be even as their mothers. The glow-worm is surrounded by a moony halo till mated, and then appears but an ordinary grub, and the birds assume rainbow

tints whilst thinking of nesting, and then hop about as dowdy, draggle-feathered fowls.

It was true that Philip had requested Mrs. Cusworth to remain in his house before he proposed to her daughter; it was true also that he had asked to be received at her table before he thought of an alliance; but it was one thing to have this old creature as a housekeeper, and another thing to be saddled with her as mother-in-law. Moreover, it was by no means certain but that Mrs. Cusworth might develop new and unpleasant peculiarities of manner or temper, as mother-in-law, which would be held in control so long as she was housekeeper, just as change of climate or situation brings out humours and rashes which were latent in the blood, and unsuspected. Some asthmatic people breathe freely on gravel, but are wheezy on clay; and certain livers become torpid below a hundred feet from the sea-level, and are active above that line. So Mrs. Cusworth might prove amiable and commonplace in a situation of subordination, but would manifest self-assertion and cock-a-hoopedness when lifted into a sphere of authority.

According to the classic fable, Epimetheus—that is, Afterthought—filled the world with discomfort and unrest; whereas Prometheus—that is, Forethought—shed universal blessing on mankind.

For once, Philip had not invoked Prometheus, and now, in revenge, Epimetheus opened his box and sent forth a thousand disquieting considerations. But it is always so—whether we act with forethought or without. Epimetheus is never napping. He is sure to open his box when an act is beyond recall.

In old English belief, the fairies that met men and won their love were one-faced beings, convex as seen from the front, concave when viewed from the rear. It is so with every blessing ardently desired, every object of ambition. We are drawn towards it, trust-

ing to its solidity; and only when we have turned round it do we perceive its vanity. No man has ever taken a decided step without a look back and a bitter laugh. Where he saw perfection he sees defect, everything on which he had reckoned is reversed to his eyes.

In Philip Pennycomequick's case there had been no ardent looking forward, no idealization of Salome, no painting of the prospect with fancy's brush; nevertheless, now when he had committed himself, and fixed his fate, he stood breathless, aghast, fearful what next might be revealed to his startled eyes. His past life had been without charm to him, it had inspired him with disgust; but the ignorance in which he was as to what the future had in store, filled him with vague apprehension.

He was alarmed at his own weakness. He could no longer trust himself; his faith in his own prudence was shaken. It is said that the stoutest hearts fail in an earthquake, for then all confidence in stability goes; but there is something more demoralizing than the stagger of the earth under our feet, and that is the reel and quake of our own self-confidence. When we lose trust in ourselves, our faith in the future is lost.

There are moments in the night when the consequences of our acts appear to us as nightmares, oppressing and terrifying us. A missionary put a magnifying-glass into the hand of a Brahmin, and bade him look through it at a drop of water. When the Hindu saw under his eye a crystal world full of monsters, he put the glass aside, and perished of thirst rather than swallow another animated drop of fluid. Fancy acts to us like that inconsiderate missionary, shows us the future, and shows it to us peopled with horrors, and the result is sometimes the paralysis of effort, the extinction of ambition. There are moments in the day, as in the night, when we look through the lens into the future, and see forms that smite us with

numbness. Such a moment was that Philip underwent in his own room. He saw Mrs. Cusworth develop into a prodigious nuisance; needy kinsfolk of his wife swimming as sponges in the crystal element of the future, with infinite capacity for suction; Janet's coquetry break through her widow's weeds. He saw more than that. He had entered on a new career, taken the management of a thriving business, to which he had passed through no apprenticeship, and which, therefore, with the best intentions, he might mismanage and bring to failure. What if he should have a family, and ruin come upon him then?

Philip wiped his brow, on which some cold moisture had formed in drops. Was he weak? What man is not weak when he is about to venture on an untried path, and knows not whither it may lead? Only such as have no sense of the burden of responsibilities are free from moments of depression and alarm such as came on Philip now.

It is not the sense of weakness and dread of the future stealing over the heart that makes a man weak; it is the yielding to it, and, because of the possible consequences, abandoning initiative.

With Philip the dread passed quickly. He had youth, and youth is hopeful; and he had a vast recuperative force of self-confidence, which speedily rallied after the blow dealt his assurance. When he had recovered his balance of mind and composure of manner, he descended the stairs to call on Mrs. Cusworth.

He found Janet in the room with her. Salome had retired to her own chamber, to solitude, of which she felt the need.

Philip spoke cheerfully to the old lady, and accepted Janet's sallies with good humour.

'You will promise to be kind to Salome,' said Mrs. Cusworth. 'Indeed she deserves kindness; she is so good a child.'

'Of that have no doubt.'

'And you will really love her?'

'I ought to be a hearty lover,' said Philip, with a slight smile, 'for I am a hearty hater, and proverbially the one qualifies for the other. Love and hatred are the two poles of the magnet; a weakly energized needle that hardly repels at one end, will not vigorously attract at the other.'

'But surely you hate no one!'

'Do I not? I have been driven to the verge of it to-day, by my aunt; but I pardon her because of the consequences that sprang out of her behaviour. She exasperated me to such a degree that I found courage to speak, and but for the stimulus applied to me, might have failed to make a bid for what I have now secured.'

'I am sorry to think that you hate anyone,' said the old lady. 'We cannot command our likes and dislikes, but we can hold hatred in check, which is an unchristian sentiment.'

'Then in hatred I am a heathen. I shall become a good Christian in time under Salome's tuition. I shall place myself unreservedly at her feet as a catechumen.'

'Sometimes,' said Janet, laughing, 'love turns to hate, and hate to love. A bishop's crosier is something like your magnetic needle. At one end is a pastoral crook, and at the other a spike, and in a careless hand the crook that should reclaim the errant lamb may be turned, and the spike transfix it.'

'I can no more conceive of love for Salome altering its quality than I can imagine my detestation—no, I will call it hate, for a certain person becoming converted to love.'

'But whom do you hate—not your aunt?'

'No; the man who ruined my father, made his life a burden to him, turned his heart to wormwood, lost him his brother's love, and his sister's regard—though

that latter was no great loss—deprived him of his social position, threw him out of the element in which alone he could breathe, and bade fair to mar my life also.'

'I never heard of your troubles,' said Mrs. Cusworth; 'Mr. Pennycomequick did not speak to us of your father. He was very reserved about family matters.'

'He never forgave my father so long as the breath was in him. That was like a Pennycomequick. We are slow in forming attachments or dislikes, but when formed we do not alter. And I—I shall never forgive the man who spoiled my father's career, and well-nigh spoiled mine.'

'Who was that, and how did he manage it?' asked Janet.

'How did he manage it? Why, he first induced my father to draw his money out of this business, and then swindled him out of it—out of almost every pound he had. By his rascality he reduced my poor father from being a man comfortably off to one in straitened circumstances; he deprived him of a home, drove him—can you conceive of a worse fate?—to live and die in furnished lodgings.'

Mrs. Cusworth did not speak. She was a little shocked at his bitterness. His face had darkened as with a suffusion of black blood under the skin, and a hard look came into his eyes, giving them a metallic glitter. He went on, noticing the bad impression he had made—he went on to justify himself. 'My father's heart was broken. He lost all hope, all joy in life, all interest in everything. I think of him as a wreck, over which the waves beat and which is piecemeal broken up—partly by the waves, partly by wreckers. That has soured me. Hamilcar brought up his son Hannibal to swear hatred to the Romans. I may almost say that I was reared in the same manner; not by direct teaching, but by every privation, every

slight, every discouragement—by the sight of my father's crushed life, and by the hopelessness that had come on my own, to swear a bitter implacable hatred of the name of Schofield.'

'Of whom?'

'Schofield—Earle Schofield. Earle was his Christian name—that is, his forename. He had not anything Christian about him.'

Philip detected a look—a startled, terrified exchange of glances—between mother and daughter.

'I see,' continued Philip, 'that I have alarmed you by the strength of my feelings. If you had endured what my father and I have endured, knowing that it was attributable to one man, then, also, you would be a heathen in your feelings towards him and all belonging to him.'

The old lady and her daughter no longer exchanged glances; they looked on the ground.

'However,' said Philip, in a lighter tone, and the shadow left his face, 'it is an innocuous feeling. I know nothing more of the man since he robbed my father. I do not know where he is, whether he be still alive. He is probably dead. I have heard no tidings of him since a rumour reached us that he had gone to America, where, if he has died, I have sufficient Christianity in me to be able to say, "Peace to his ashes!"'

He looked at Mrs. Cusworth. The old woman was strangely agitated, her face of the deadly hue that flesh assumes when the blood has retreated to the heart.

Janet was confused and uneasy—but that was explicable. Her mother's condition accounted for it.

'Mr. John Dale!' The maid opened the door and introduced the doctor from Bridlington.

'Mr. Dale!' Janet and her mother started up and drew a long breath, as though relieved by his appearance from a situation embarrassing and painful.

'Oh, Mr. Dale! how glad, how heartily glad we are to see you!'

Then turning, first to Philip and next to the surgeon, Janet said, with a smile: 'Now I must introduce you —my guardian and my brother-in-law prospective.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RECOGNITION.

JEREMIAH PENNYCOMEQUICK remained quietly at his friend's house at Bridlington for some weeks.

'As so much time has slipped away since your disappearance,' said John Dale; 'it does not much matter whether a little more be sent tobogganing after it. I can't go to Mergatroyd very well just now; I am busy, and have a delicate case on my hands that I will not entrust to others. If you can and will wait my convenience, I promise you I will go. If not—go yourself. But, upon my word, I should dearly like to be at Mergatroyd to witness your resurrection.'

Jeremiah waited. He had been weakened by his illness, and had become alarmed about himself. He shrank from exertion, from strong emotion, fearing for his heart. In an amusing story by a Swiss novelist, a man believes that he has a fungus growing on his heart, and he comes to live for this fungus, to eat only such things as he is convinced will disagree with the fungus, to engage in athletic sports, with the hope of shaking off the fungus, to give up reading the newspapers, because he ceases to take interest in politics, being engrossed in his fungus, and finally to discover that he has been subjected to a delusion, the fungus existing solely in his imagination.

Mr. Pennycomequick had become alarmed about his heart; he put his finger periodically to his pulse to ascertain its regularity, imagined himself subject

to spasms, to feel stabs; he suspected numbness, examined his lips and eyelids at the glass to discover whether he were more or less bloodless than the day before, and shunned emotion as dangerous to a heart whose action was abnormal. The rest from business, the relief from responsibility, were good for him. The even life at his friend's house suited him. But he did not rapidly gain strength.

He walked on the downs when the weather permitted, not too fast lest he should unduly distress his heart, nor too slowly lest he should catch cold. He was dieted by his doctor, and ate docilely what was meted to him; if he could have had his sleep and wakefulness measured as well, he would have been content, but sleep would not come when called, banished by thoughts of the past, and questions concerning the future.

John Dale was a pleasant man to be with; fond of a good story, and able to tell one; fond of a good dinner, and—being a bachelor—able to keep a cook who could furnish one; fond of good wine, and with a cellar stocked with it. He was happy to have his old comrade with him; and Jeremiah enjoyed being the guest of John Dale, enjoyed discussing old acquaintances, reviewing old scenes, refreshing ancient jokes.

Thus time passed, and passed pleasantly, though not altogether satisfactorily to Jeremiah, who was impatient at being unwell, and uneasy about his heart.

At length John Dale fulfilled his undertaking; he went to Mergatroyd to see how matters progressed there. He arrived, as has already been stated, at a moment when his appearance afforded relief to the widow. He talked with Janet, and with Salome; but he had not many hours at his disposal, and his interviews with the Cusworths were necessarily brief. He was obliged to consult with Janet about her affairs, and that occupied most of his time. From Salome he learned nothing concerning the will more than what

he had already heard. She told him no particulars; and, indeed, considered it unnecessary to discuss it, as her engagement to Philip altered her prospects.

'But, bless me, this must have been a case of love at first sight!' said Mr. Dale. 'Why, Salome, you did not know him till the other day!'

'No; I had not seen him till after the death of my dear uncle, but I, somehow, often thought of and a little fretted about him. I was troubled that dear uncle had not made friends with his brother, and that he kept his nephew at arm's length. I pitied Mr. Philip before I knew him. I could not hear that he had done anything to deserve this neglect; and what little was told me about the cause of difference between uncle and his brother did not make me think that the estrangement ought to last and be extended to the next generation. In my stupid way I sometimes tried to bring uncle to another mind, and to think more kindly of them. I was so grieved to think that Mr. Philip should grow up in ignorance of the nobility and worth of his uncle's character. Do you know—Mr. Dale—one reason why I am glad that I am going to marry Philip is that I may have a real right to call Mr. Pennycomequick my uncle? Hitherto I called him so to himself, and mamma, and one or two others, but I knew that he was no relation.'

'How about the identification of Mr. Jeremiah's body?' asked the surgeon.

'With that I had nothing to do. I was not called on to give my opinion. Mrs. Sidebottom swore to it. The body wore the surtout that I know belonged to Mr. Pennycomequick, but that was all. How he came by it I cannot explain. Mrs. Sidebottom was so convinced that her view was correct that she had an explanation to give why the corpse wore hardly any other clothes. I did not believe when it was found, and I do not believe now, that the body was that of uncle.'

'But you do not doubt that Mr. Pennycomequick is dead?'

'Oh no! of course not. If he had been alive he would have returned to us. There was nothing to hinder him from doing so.'

'Nothing of which you are aware.'

John Dale heard a favourable account of Philip from everyone to whom he spoke, except Janet, who did not appreciate his good qualities, and was keenly alive to his defects. He could not inquire at the factory, but he was a shrewd man, and he picked up opinions from the station-master, from some with whom he walked up the hill, from a Mergatroyd tradesman who travelled with him in the same railway-carriage. All were decidedly in Philip's favour. The popular voice was appreciative. He was regarded as a man of business habits and integrity of character.

John Dale returned to Bridlington.

'News for you, old boy!' shouted he, as he entered his house, and then looked steadily at Jeremiah to see how he would receive the news he brought. 'What do you think? Wonders will never cease. Salome——'

'Well, what about Salome?'

Jeremiah's mouth quivered. John Dale smiled. 'Young people naturally gravitate towards each other. There is only one commandment given to men that receives general and cheerful acceptance, save from a few perverse creatures such as you and me—and that commandment is to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Salome is engaged to be married.'

Jeremiah's face became like chalk. He put his hand over his eyes, then hastily withdrew it. Dale saw his emotion, and went on talking so as to cover it and give him time to master it. 'I have read somewhere, that in mediæval times in the German cities, the marriageable young men were summoned before the Burgomaster on New Year's Day, and ordered to get married before Easter on pain of expulsion from

the city. Bachelorhood was regarded as unpatriotic if not criminal. It is a pity this law was not in force here a few years ago—and that you and I were not policed into matrimony. Now it is too late; both of us have acquired bachelor habits, and it would be cruelty to force us into a condition which we have eschewed, and for which we have ceased to be fitted.'

'Whom is she going to marry?' asked Jeremiah, controlling his emotions by an effort.

'No other than your nephew Philip. I will tell you what I know.'

Then John Dale gave his friend a succinct account of what he had heard. He told him what he had learned of Philip.

'Do you grudge her to your nephew?' asked Dale.

'I do not know Philip,' answered Jeremiah curtly.

'I heard nothing but golden opinions of him,' said Dale. 'The only person to qualify these was that puss, Janet, and she of course thinks no one good enough for her dear sister Salome.'

Jeremiah's heart swelled. How easy it would be for him to spoil all the schemes that had been hatched since his disappearance. Philip was reckoning on becoming a well-to-do manufacturer; on founding a household; was looking forward to a blissful domestic life enriched with the love of Salome. Jeremiah had but to show himself; and all these plans would disappear as the desert mirage; Philip would have to return to his lawyer's clerkship and abandon every prospect of domestic happiness and commercial success.

'One thing more,' said Dale, 'I do not quite like the looks of my little pet, Janet. Her troubles have worn her more than I suspected. Besides she never had the robustness of her sister. It is hard that wits and constitution should go to one of the twins, and leave the other scantily provided with both.'

Jeremiah said no more. He was looking gloomily

before him into vacancy. John Dale declared he must visit his patients, and left his friend.

Jeremiah continued for some minutes in a brown study; and then he, also, rose, put on his overcoat and muffler, and went forth to the cliffs, to muse on what he had heard, and to decide his future course.

The tidings of Salome's engagement were hard to bear. He thought he had taught himself to think of her no longer in the light of a possible wife. His good sense had convinced him that it would be unwise for him to think of marriage with her; it told him also that he was as yet too infirm of purpose to trust himself in her presence.

Could he now return? If he did, in what capacity? —as the maker or marrer of Philip's fortunes? If he took him into partnership, so as to enable him to marry, could he—Jeremiah—endure the daily spectacle of his nephew's happiness?—endure to witness the transfer to another of that love and devotion which had been given to him? And if he banished Philip, what would be the effect on Salome? Would she not resent his return, and regret that he had not died in the flood? If he were to allow those in Mergatroyd to know that he was alive it would be almost the same thing as returning into their midst, as it would disconcert their arrangements effectually. The wisest course for himself, and the kindest to them, would be for him to depart from England for a twelvemonth or more, without giving token that he still existed, and then on his return he would be able to form an unprejudiced opinion of his nephew, and act accordingly. If he found him what, according to Dale's account, he promised to become—a practical, hardworking, honourable manager—he would leave the conduct of the business in his hands, only reclaiming that share which had been grasped by Mrs. Sidebottom, which, moreover, he would feel a—— perhaps malicious pleasure in taking from her.

He seated himself on one of the benches placed at intervals on the down for the convenience of visitors, and looked out to sea. The sun shone, and the day, for a winter's day, was warm. Very little air stirred, and Jeremiah thought that to rest himself on the bench could do him no harm, so long as he did not remain there till he felt chilled.

As he sat on the bench, immersed in his troubled thoughts, a gentleman came up, bowed, and took a place at his side.

'Beautiful weather! beautiful weather!' said the stranger, 'and such weather, I am glad to say, is general at Bridlington. Of the three hundred and sixty-five days in the year the average of days on which the sun shines is two hundred and seventy-three decimal four. When we get an interruption of what we regard as bad weather, oh! what murmurers, sad murmurers we are against a beneficent Providence. The so-called bad weather dissipates the insalubrious gases and brings in a fresh supply of invigorating ozone, life-sustaining oxygen, and the other force-stimulating elements—elements.'

Jeremiah nodded. He was not well pleased to be drawn into conversation at this moment, when occupied with his own thoughts.

'"La santé avant tout," say the French,' continued the gentleman, 'with that terseness which characterizes the Gallic tongue—the tongue, sir.' When he repeated a word he ruffled and swelled and turned himself about like a pluming turkey, and as though believing that he had said a good thing. 'I agree with them; I would subordinate every consideration to health, every consideration, sir, except religion, which towers, sir, steeples and weather-cocks high above every other mundane con—sid—er—ation.' As he pronounced each syllable apart, as though each was a pearl he dropped from his lips, he turned himself about, scattering his precious particles, till he

faced Jeremiah. 'You, yourself, sir, I perceive, are in search of that inestimable prize, health—Hygiene, I mean.'

Mr. Pennycomequick was startled at this random shot, and looked more closely at his interlocutor. He saw a man of about his own height, with long hair, whiskers that were elaborately curled, and perhaps darkened with antimony; a handsome man, but with a mottled face and a nose inclined to redness. There was a something—Jeremiah could not tell what, it was in his face—that made him suspect he had seen the man before; or, if he had not seen him before, had seen someone like him. He looked again at his face, not steadily, lest he should seem discourteous, but hastily, and withal searchingly. No, he had not seen him previously, and yet there was certainly something in his face that was familiar.

'You are not, I presume, aware,' continued the gentleman, 'that there is a very remarkable and unique feature of this bay which points it out specially as the sanatorium of the future. The iodine in the seaweed here—the i-o-dine, sir—reaches a percentage unattained elsewhere. It has been analysed, and, whereas along the seaside resorts on the English Channel it is two decimal four to five decimal one of potass, there is a steady accession of iodine in the seaweed, as you mount the east coast—the *east* coast, sir—till it reaches its maximum at the spot where we now are; where the proportions are almost reversed, the iodine standing at five, or, to be exact, four decimal eight, and the potass at three decimal two. This is a very interesting fact, sir, and as important as it is interesting—as it is in-ter-est-ing.'

The gentleman worked his elbows, as though uncomfortable in his overcoat, that did not fit him.

'The iodine is suspended in the atmosphere, as also is the ozone; but it is concentrated in the algæ. Conceive of the advantage to humanity, and contem-

plate the beneficence of Providence, not only in gathering into one focus the distributed iodine of the universe, but also in discovering this fact to me, and enabling me and a few others to whom I confide the secret, to realize out of the iodine, I will not say a competence, but a colossal fortune.'

'And pray,' said Jeremiah, with a tone of sarcasm in his voice, 'what is the good of iodine when you have it?'

'What is the good—the good of iodine?'

The gentleman turned round solidly and looked at Mr. Pennycomequick from head to foot. 'Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you do not know for what purpose an all-wise Providence has put iodine in the world? Why, it is one of the most potent, I may say it is the *only* agent for the reduction of muscular, vascular, osseous, abnormal secretions.' From the way in which he employed such words as vascular, osseous, abnormal, and secretions, it was apparent that they gave the speaker thorough enjoyment to use them. 'For any and every form of disorder of the cartilaginous system it is sovereign—sov-er-eign.'

'For the heart also?' asked Jeremiah, becoming interested in iodine.

'For all cardiac affections—supreme. It is known as yet to very few—only to such as know it through me—that Bridlington is a spot so abounding in iodine, so marked out by nature as a resort for all those who suffer from glandular affections, stiff joints, rickets, cardial infirmities—and, according to a system I am about to make public—tubercular phthisis.'

He turned himself about and shook his mouth, as shaking comfits out of a bag, 'tu-ber-cular phthi-sis!'

After a pause, in which he smiled, well pleased with himself, he said, 'Perhaps you will condescend to take my card, and if I can induce you to take a share in Iodinopolis——'

'Iodinopolis?'

'The great sanatorium of the future. A company is being formed to buy up land, to erect ranges of beautiful marine villas, to rear palatial hotels. There is a low church here already, and if we can persuade his grace the Archbishop to help us to a high church also, the place will be ready, the nest prepared for the birds. Then we propose to give a bonus to every physician who recommends a patient to Bridlington, for the first three or four years, till the tide of fashion has set in so strong that we can dispense with bonuses, the patients themselves insisting on being sent here. What said Ledru Rollin? "I am the leader of the people, therefore I must follow them."' He handed his card to Mr. Pennycomequick, who looked at it and saw:

'MR. BEAPLE YEO,
Financier.'

Every now and then there came in the stranger's voice an intonation that seemed familiar to Jeremiah; in itself nothing decided, but sufficient, like a scent, to recall something, yet not pronounced enough to enable him to determine what it was in the past that was recalled. Again Jeremiah looked at the gentleman, and his attention was all at once directed to his great-coat.

'How odd—how strange!' he muttered.

'What, sir? what is strange?' asked the gentleman. 'That such a splendid opportunity of making a fortune should lie at our feet—lie literally at our feet, without figure of speech—for there it is, in the seaweed, here it is, in the air we inhale, now humming in the grass of the down? Perhaps you may like——' he fumbled in his great-coat pocket.

'Excuse me,' said Jeremiah, 'that overcoat bears the most extraordinary resemblance to——' but he checked himself.

'Made by my tailor in New Bond Street,' said Mr.

Yeo. 'Here, sir, is the prospectus. This is a speculation on which not only large capitalists may embark, but also the widow can contribute her mite, and reap as they have sown, the capitalist receiving in proportion as the widow—*as* the widow. I myself, guarantee eighteen and a half per cent. That I guarantee on my personal security—but I reckon that the return will be at the rate of twenty-four decimal three—the decimal is important, because the calculation has been strict.'

Mr. Pennycomequick ran his eye over the list of managers.

'You will see,' said Mr. Yeo, 'that our chairman is the Earl of Schofield. His lordship has taken up a hundred and twenty shares of £10 each—the first call is for five shillings per share.'

'Earl Schofield!' murmured Mr. Pennycomequick. 'Earl Schofield! Earl Schofield! I do not know much of the peerage—not in my line—but the name is familiar to me. Earl Schofield!—Excuse me, but there was a great scoundrel——'

'Hah!' interrupted Mr. Yeo, and waved his cane, 'there is my secretary signalling to me from away yonder on the dunes. Excuse me—I must go to him.'

He rose and walked hastily away.

'How very odd!' said Jeremiah. 'I could swear he was in my great-coat.' He watched the man as he strode away. 'And that hat!—surely I know that also.'

CHAPTER XXV.

WITHOUT BELLS.

VIRGILIUS, Bishop of Salzburg in the eighth century, condemned the erroneous doctrine held by some that we have antipodes. It was, no doubt, true that men in the Middle Ages had not their antipodes, but it is

certainly otherwise now. Where our fathers' heads were, there now are our feet. Everything is the reverse in this generation of what it was in the last. Medicine condemns those things which medicine did enjoin, and enjoins those things which were forbidden. What our parents revered that we turn into burlesque, and what they cast aside as worthless that we collect and treasure. Maxims that moulded the conduct in the last generation are trampled underfoot in this, and principles thought immutable are broken by the succeeding age, as royal seals are broken on the death of the sovereign. If we were bred up by our fathers in high Toryism, when of age we turn a somersault and pose as Social Democrats; if we learned the Gospel at our mother's knee we profess Buddhism with the sprouting of our whiskers. The social and moral barriers set up by our fathers we throw down, and just as pigs when driven in one direction turn their snouts the other way, so do we—so do our children; which is an evidence in favour of Darwinianism, showing that the porcine character still inheres.

It was regarded of old as a canon by romance writers, that the final chapter of the last volume, be it the seventh as in the days of Richardson, or the third as in these of Mudie and Smith, should end with the marriage of the hero and heroine. A cruel and wayward Fate held the couple apart through the entire story, but they came together in the end. And there was a reason for this. Marriage is the climax of the romance of life. It concludes one epoch and opens another, and that which it opens is prosaic. It was concluded, and concluded with some show of reason that a romance should deal with the romantic period of life and finish when that reaches its apogee.

The Parliament of Love at Toulouse in the twelfth century laid down that love and marriage were mutually exclusive terms; that romance died to the sound of wedding-bells, or at longest lingered to the expiration

of the honeymoon. This law has governed novelists ever since. The ingenuity of the author has consisted in devising impediments to the union of the lovers, and in knocking them out of their way as the story neared its conclusion.

But in this revolutionary age we have discarded the rule; and carried away by the innovating stream the author of this tale has ventured to displace the marriage. Had he been completely lost to reverence for the ancient canons, in his desire to be original, he would have opened his novel with a wedding procession, strutting to the carriages over strewn flowers, holding bouquets, with the pealing of wedding-bells, whilst the bridegroom's man circulates, tipping the parson, the curate, the pewopener, the sexton, the clerk, the bellringers, and all the other sharks that congregate about a bridegroom, as the fish congregate about a ship on board of which is a corpse. But, as the author is still held in check by old rule, or prejudice, and yet yields somewhat to the modern spirit of relaxation, he compromises between the extremes, and introduces the marriage in the middle of his tale.

In a novel, a marriage is always built up of much romantic and picturesque and floral adjunct. It is supposed necessarily to involve choral hymns, white favours, bridal veils, orange blossoms, tears in the bride, flaming cheeks in the bridegroom, speeches at the breakfast, an old slipper, and a shower of rice. Without these condiments a wedding is a very insipid dish.

But here we are forced to innovate.

The marriage of Philip Pennycomequick and Salome Cusworth was hurried on; there was no necessity for delay, and it was performed in a manner so prosaic as to void it of every feature of romance and refinement.

In the parish church there was morning prayer every day at nine, and this service Salome frequently attended.

On one morning—as it happened, a gray one, with a spitting sky—Philip also attended matins, from 'the wicked man' to the final 'Amen.' When, however, the service was concluded—a service attended by five Sisters of Mercy and three devout ladies—the vicar, instead of leaving the desk, coughed, blew his nose, and glowered down the church.

Then the clerk began to fumble among some books, the five Sisters of Mercy perked up, the devout ladies who had moved from their seats towards the church door were seized with a suspicion that something unusual was about to take place, and hastily returned to their places. The Sisters of Mercy had with them one penitent, whom with sugar-plums they were alluring into the paths of virtue. It at once occurred to these religious women that to witness a wedding would have an elevating, healthy effect on their penitent, and they resolved to stay—for her sake, for her sake only; they, for their parts, being raised above all mundane interests. Also, the servants of the vicarage, which adjoined the churchyard, by some means got wind of what was about to occur, and slipped ulsters over their light cotton gowns, and tucked their caps under pork-pie hats, and tumbled into church breathing heavily.

Then Philip, trying to look as if nothing was about to happen, came out of his pew, and in doing so stumbled over a hassock, knocked down his umbrella which leaned against the pew, and sent some hymnals and church services about the floor. Then he walked up the church, and was joined by Salome and her sister and mother. No psalm was sung, no 'voice breathed o'er Eden,' but the Sisters of Mercy intoned the responses with vociferous ardour, and the penitent took the liveliest interest in the ceremonial, expressing her interest in giggles and suppressed 'Oh my's!'

Finally, after 'amazement,' the parson, clerk, bride and bridegroom, and witnesses adjourned to the vestry,

where the vicar made his customary joke about the lady singing her surname for the last time.

The bellringers knew nothing about the wedding, and having been unforewarned were not present to ring a peal. No carriage with white favours to horses and driver was at the door of the church—no cab was kept at Mergatroyd—no rice was thrown, no slipper cast.

The little party walked quietly and unobserved back to their house under umbrellas, and on reaching home partook of a breakfast that consisted of fried fish, bacon, eggs, toast, butter, and home-made marmalade. No guests were present, no speeches were made, no healths drunk. There was to be no wedding tour. Philip could not leave the mill, and the honeymoon must be passed in the smoky atmosphere of Mergatroyd, and without the intermission of the daily routine of work.

As Philip walked home with Salome under the same umbrella, from the points of which the discoloured water dropped, he said in a low tone to her, 'I have, as you desired, offered your mother to manage her affairs for her. She has accepted my offer, and I have looked through her accounts. She has very little money.'

'I do not suppose she can have much; my poor father died before he was in a position to save any considerable sum.'

'She has about five hundred pounds in Indian railway bonds, and a couple of hundred in a South American loan, and some three hundred in home railways—about fifteen to sixteen hundred pounds in all—that is to say, she had this a little while ago.'

'And has it still, no doubt.'

'No; you yourself told me she had met with losses.'

'She informed me that she had, but I cannot understand how this can have been. I doubt entirely that she met with losses.'

'But she allowed me to see her book, and she has sold out some stock—in fact, between two and three hundred pounds' worth. She did that almost immediately after my uncle's death.'

'But she has the money realized, I suppose.'

'Not at all. It is gone.'

'Gone!'

'She cannot and will not account for it to me, except by the vague explanation that she had a sudden and unexpected call upon her which she was forced to meet.'

'But—she said nothing about this to me. It is very odd.'

'It is, as you say, odd. It is, of course, possible that Janet may have had something to do with it, but I cannot say; your mother will not enlighten me.'

'I cannot understand this,' said Salome musingly.

'I regret my offer,' said Philip. 'I would not have made it if I had not thought I should be met with candour, and given the information I desired.'

When Mrs. Sidebottom heard that the marriage had actually taken place, then her moral sense reared like a cob unaccustomed to the curb.

'It is a scandal!' she exclaimed, 'and so shortly after my sweet brother's death. A bagman's daughter, too!'

'Uncle Jeremiah died in November,' said the captain.

'Well, and this is March. To marry a bagman's daughter in March! It is a scandal, an outrage on the family.'

'My uncle would have had no objections, I suppose. Philip is as good as Mr. Baynes.'

'As good! How you talk, Lamb! as if all the brains in your skull had gone to water. Philip is a Pennycomequick, and Baynes is—of course, a Baynes.'

'What of that?'

'Mr. Baynes was a manufacturer.'

'So is Philip.'

'Well, yes; for his sins. But then he is allied to us who have dropped an *n*, and capitalized a Q, and adopted and inserted a hyphen. Mr. Baynes was not in the faintest degree related to us. Philip has behaved with gross indecency. A bagman's daughter within five months of his uncle's death! Monstrous. If she had been his social equal we could have waived the month—but, a bagman's daughter! I feel as if allied to blackbeetles.'

'Her father was about to be taken into partnership when he died,' argued the captain.

'If he had been a partner, that would have been another matter, and I should not have been so pained and mortified; but he was not, and a man takes his position by the place he occupied when he died, not by that which he might have occupied had he lived. Why, if Sidebottom had lived and been elected Mayor of Northingham in the year of the Prince's visit he might have been knighted, but that does not make me Lady Sidebottom.'

'You call him a bagman,' said Captain Lambert. 'But I should say he was a commercial traveller.'

'And how does that mend matters? Do seven syllables make a difference? A dress-improver is no other than a bustle, and an influenza than a cold in the head.'

'All I know is,' said the captain, 'that his daughters are deuced pretty girls, and as good a pair of ladies as you will meet anywhere. I've known some of your grand ladies say awfully stupid things, and I can't imagine Janet doing that; and some do rather mean things, and Salome could not by any chance do what was unkind or ungenerous. I've a deuce of a mind to propose t Ja et, as I have been chiselled out of my one hundred nd fifty.'

'Chiselled out!'

'Yes, out of my annuity. If the will had been valid

I should have had that of my own; but now I have nothing, and am forced to go to you for every penny to buy tobacco. It is disgusting. I'll marry Janet. I am glad she is a widow and available. She has a hundred and fifty per annum of her own, and is certainly left something handsome by Baynes.'

'Fiddlesticks!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom.

'I will, indeed, unless I am more liberally treated. I hate to be dependent on you for everything. I wish I had served a *caveat* against your getting administration of the property, and done something to get the old will put to rights.'

Mrs. Sidebottom turned green with anger and alarm. 'I will go to Philip's wedding breakfast, or dinner, or dance, or whatever he is going to have, and snatch a kiss from little Janet, pull her behind the window-curtains and propose for her hundred and fifty, I will.'

Lambert's mother was very angry, but she said no more. She knew the character of her son; he would not bestir himself to do what he threatened. His bark was worse than his bite. He fumed and then turned cold.

But Philip gave no entertainment on his wedding-day, invited no one to his house; consequently Lambert had not the opportunity he desired for pulling Janet behind the window-curtains, snatching a kiss and proposing for her hundred and fifty pounds.

'I shall refuse to know them,' said Mrs. Sidebottom.

'And return to York?' asked her son.

'I can't leave at once,' answered his mother. 'I have the house on my hands. Besides, I must have an eye on the factory. Lamb, if you had any spirit in you, you would learn book-keeping, so as to be able to control the accounts. I do not trust Philip; how can I, when he marries a bagman's daughter? It is a proof of deficiency in common sense, and a

lack of sense of rectitude. Who was Salome's mother? We do not know her maiden name. These sort of people are like diatoms that fill the air, and no one can tell whence they came and what they are. They are everywhere about us and all equally insignificant.'

Mrs. Sidebottom had but the ears of her son into which to pour her discontent, for she had no acquaintances in Mergatroyd.

On coming there she had been met by the manufacturers' wives in a cordial spirit. Her brother was highly respected, and they hastened to call on her and express their readiness to do her any kindness she might need as a stranger to the town. She would have been received into the society there—a genial one—had she been inclined. But she was supercilious. She allowed the ladies of Mergatroyd to understand that she belonged to another and a higher order of beings, and that the days in which the gods and goddesses came down from Olympus to hold converse with men were over.

The consequence was that she was left to herself, and now she grumbled at the dulness of a place which was only dull to her, because of her own want of tact. No more kindly, friendly people are to be found in England than the north country manufacturers; but the qualities of frankness, directness, which are conspicuous in them, were precisely those qualities which Mrs. Sidebottom was incapable of appreciating, were qualities which to her mind savoured of barbarism.

And yet Mrs. Sidebottom belonged, neither by birth nor by marriage nor by acceptance, to a superior class. She was the daughter of a manufacturer, and the widow of a small country attorney. As the paralytic in the sheep-market waited for an angel to put him into the pool, so did Mrs. Sidebottom spend her time and exhaust her powers in vain endeavours to get dipped in the cleansing basin of county society, in which she might be purged of the taint of trade.

And, like the paralytic of the story, she had to wait, and was disappointed annually, and had the mortification of seeing some neighbour or acquaintance step past her and enter the desired circle, whilst she was making ready and beating about for an introducer.

She attended concerts, public balls, went to missionary meetings; she joined working parties for charitable objects, took stalls at bazaars, hoping by these means to get within the vortex of the fashionable world and be drawn *in*, but was always disappointed. Round every eddy may be seen sticks and straws that spin on their own axes; they make dashes inwards, and are repelled, never succeeding in being caught by the coil of the whirlpool. So was she ever hovering on the outskirts of the aristocratic ring, ever aiming to pierce it, and always missing her object.

A poem by Kenrick, written at the coronation of George III., represents that celebrated beauty and toast, the Countess of Coventry, recently deceased, applying to Pluto for permission to return to earth and mingle in the entertaiments of the Coronation. Pluto gives his consent; she may go—but as a ghost remain unseen.

Then says the Countess:

> 'A fig for fine sights, if unseen one's fine face,
> What signifies seeing, if one's self is not seen?'

So Mrs. Sidebottom found that it was very little pleasure to her to hover about genteel society, and see into it, without herself being seen in it. Her descent to Mergatroyd was in part due to a rebuff she had met with at York, quite as much as to her desire to conciliate her half-brother. She trusted that when she returned to York she would be so much richer than before that this would afford her the requisite momentum which might impel her within the magic circle, within which, when once rotating,

she would be safe, confident of being able to maintain her place.

'My dear Lamb,' said she, 'I may inform you, in the strictest confidence, that I see my way to becoming wealthy, really wealthy. There is a speculation on foot, of which I have received information through my York agent, to buy up land and build a great health resort near Bridlington, to be called Iodinopolis or Yeoville, the name is not quite fixed. No one is to know anything about it but the few who take preference shares. I am most anxious to realize some of the securities that came to me through my darling brother's death, so as to invest. The manager is called Beaple Yeo.'

'Never heard of him.'

'And the chairman is the Earl of Schofield. Mr. Beaple Yeo and the Earl together guarantee seventeen per cent.—think of that, Lamb!—on their own guarantee!—an Earl, too—and the funds are only three or three and a half!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

HYMEN.

A TWELVEMONTH slipped away, easily, happily; to none more so than to Philip Pennycomequick.

To the Fates, how strange must seem the readiness with which women plunge into matrimony, and the shyness with which some men look at it! for matrimony is emphatically an institution designed for the comfort of man irrespective of the interests of the woman. The married man ceases to have care about his meals, they come to him; he gives no thought to his servants, they are managed for him; he is not troubled about his clothing, it now hangs together, whereas formerly it fell to pieces.

When the married man prepares to shave, the soap-dish is full, his tidy is clean, his razors in order; the bachelor finds all in confusion. Before marriage, he who had a cook was served with India-rubber; after it, he gets his meat succulent and well cooked. Before marriage, the linen went to the wash, and only half returned, silk handkerchiefs returned as cotton, stockings came odd, jerseys in holes, sheets in rags, and shirt-fronts enamelled with iron-mould; after marriage, everything returns in good condition and in proper number.

But to the woman, matrimony is by no means a relief from cares. On the contrary, the woman passes through the ring into an arena of battle. We are told by anthropologists that in the primitive condition of society a subdivision of tasks took place; one set of men undertook to till the earth and manage the domestic animals, whilst another girded on their arms and defended the infant community. These latter, for their services, were fed by the tillers, housed, and clothed with food they had not grown, houses they had not builded, clothing they had not woven. The same subdivision of labour continues still in the family, where the man is the tiller and toiler, and the woman is the military element. She marches round the confines of his house, fights daily battles with those foes of domestic felicity — the servants. When they oversleep themselves, she routs them out of their beds; when they neglect the dusting, she flies in pursuit to bring them to their duties; when they are impudent, she drives them out of the house.

With what unflagging zeal does she maintain her daily conflicts! How she countermines, discovers ambushes, circumvents, throws open the gates, and charges the foe!

Now consider what was the life of the girl before she married. She had no worries, no warfare; she

was petted, admired; she enjoyed herself, indulged her caprices unrestrained, gave way to her humours unrebuked. Her bonnets, her dresses were given to her, she had no care what she might eat, any more than the lilies of the field, only, unlike them, devoting herself to the thoughts of her clothing, for which, however, she had not to pay. Unmarried girls were anciently termed spinsters, and are so derisively still in the banns, for they formerly spun the linen for their future homes; now they toil not, neither do they spin.

Then comes marriage, and all is changed. They enter into a world of discords and *désagréments*. They have to grow long nails and to sharpen their teeth; they have to haggle with shopkeepers, fight their servants; whereas the husbands, those sluggard kings of creation, smack their lips over their dinners, and lounge in their easy-chairs, and talk politics with their friends, and smile, and smile, unconscious of the struggles and passions that rage downstairs.

The eyes that, in the girl, looked at the beauties of creation, in the married woman search out delinquencies in their domestics, and defects in the household furniture. The eyes that looked for violets now peer for cobwebs; that lingered lovingly on the sunset glow, now examine the coal-bill; and the ear that listed to the song of Philomel, is now on the alert for a male voice in the kitchen. The nose that of old inhaled the perfume of the rose, now pokes into pots and pans in quest of dripping.

From what has been said above, the reader may conclude that the position of the wife, though a belligerent one, is at all events regal. She is queen of the house, and if she has trouble with her servants, it is as a sovereign who has to resist revolutionary movements among her subjects.

No more mistaken idea can well be entertained. As the Pope writes himself, 'Servant of the servants of

Heaven,' so does the lady of the house subscribe herself servant of the servants of the establishment. If she searches into their shortcomings, remonstrates, and resents them, it is as the subject criticising, murmuring at, and revolting personally against the tyranny of her oppressors. So far from being the head of the house, she is the door-mat, trampled on, kicked, set at nought, obliged to swallow all the dirt that is brought into the house.

Marriage had produced a change in Philip. It had made him less stony, angular, formal. Matrimony often has a remarkable effect on those who enter into it, reducing their peculiarities, softening their hardnesses, and accentuating those points of similarity which are to be found in the two brought into close association, so that in course of time a singular resemblance in character and features is observable in married folk. In an old couple there is to be seen occasionally a likeness as that of brother and sister. This is caused by their being exposed to the same caresses and the same strokes of fortune; they are weathered by the same breezes, moistened by the same rains. In addition to the exterior forces moulding a couple, comes the reciprocal action of the inner powers — their passions, prejudices — so that they recoil on each other. They come to think alike, to feel alike, as well as to look alike. The man unconsciously loses some of his ruggedness, and the woman acquires some of his breadth and strength. They become in some measure reflectors to each other, the light one catches is cast on and brightens the other, and they mirror whatever passes along the face of the other.

The subtle, mysterious modelling process had begun on Philip, although but recently married. Janet was no longer in the house; she had returned to France, and as her constitution was delicate had followed advice, and gone to the South for the winter.

Mrs. Sidebottom and the captain had shaken off the dust from their feet against Mergatroyd, and had returned to their favourite city, York, where they resumed the interrupted gyrations about the whirlpool of fashionable life, and Mrs. Sidebottom made her usual rushes, still ineffectual, at its centre.

Consequently, Philip was left to the undisturbed influence of Salome, and this influence affected him more than he was conscious of, and would have allowed was possible. He was very happy, but he was not the man to confess it, least of all to his wife. As a Canadian Indian deems it derogatory to his dignity to express surprise at any wonder of civilization shown him, so did Philip consider that it comported with his dignity to accept all the comforts, the ease, the love that surrounded him as though familiar with them from the beginning. Englishmen who have been exposed to tropic suns in Africa, have their faces shrivelled and lined. When they returned to England, in the soft, humid atmosphere the flesh expands, and drinks in moisture at every pore. The lines fade out, and the flesh becomes plump. So did the sweet, soothing influence of Salome, equable as it was gentle, fill, relax, refresh the spirit of Philip, and restore to him some of the lost buoyancy of youth. Salome was admirably calculated to render him happy, and Philip was not aware of the rare good fortune which had given him a wife who had the self-restraint to keep her crosses to herself. That is not the way with all wives. Many a wife makes a beast of burden of her husband, lading him with crosses, heaping on his shoulders not only her own, great or small, but also all those of her relatives, friends and acquaintances. Such a wife cracks a whip behind her good man; drives him through the town, stopping at every house and calling, 'Any old crosses! Old crosses! Old crosses! Chuck them on; his back is broad to bear them!' precisely as the scavenger goes through the

streets with his cart and burdens it with the refuse of every house. Many a wife takes a pride in thus breaking the back, and galling the sides, and knocking together the knees of her husband with the crosses she piles on his shoulders.

As we walk through the wilderness of life, burrs adhere to the coat of Darby and to the skirts of Joan. Why should not each carry his or her own burrs, if they refuse to be picked off and thrown away? Why should Joan collect all hers and poke them down the neck of Darby, and expect him to work them down his back from the nape to the heel? Little thought had Philip how, unperceived and by stealth, Salome sought the burrs that adhered to him, removed them and thrust them into her own bosom, bearing them there with a smiling face, and leaving him unconscious that he had been delivered from any, and that they were fretting her.

We men are sadly regardless of the thousand little acts of forethought that lighten and ease our course. We give no thanks, we are not even aware of what has been done for us. Nevertheless, our wives do not go unrewarded, though unthanked, for what they have done or borne; their gentle attentions have served to give us a polish and a beauty we had not before we came into their tender hands.

A bright face met Philip when he returned from the factory every day. If Salome saw that he was downcast, she exerted herself to cheer him; if that he was cheerful, she was careful not to discourage him. Always neat in person, fresh in face, and pleasant in humour, keeping out of Philip's way whatever might annoy him, she made him as happy as he could well be.

Perfectly happy Philip could not be, because unable to shake off the sense of insecurity that attended his change of fortune. Constitutionally suspicious, habituated to the shade, he was dazzled and frightened

when exposed to the light. The access of good luck had been too sudden and too great, for him to trust its permanency. The fish that has its jaws transfixed with broken hooks mistrusts the worm that floats down the stream unattached to a line. The expectation of disappointment had been bred in him by painful and repeated experience, and had engendered a sullen predetermination to mistrust Good Fortune. He regarded her as a treacherous goddess, and when she smiled, he was sure that she meditated a stab with a hidden dagger.

Such as are born in the lap of fortune, from which they have never been given a fall, or where they have never been dosed with quassia through a drenching spoon, such persons look on life with equanimity. Nothing would surprise them more than a reverse. But with the step-sons of fortune, the Cinderellas in the great household of humanity, who have encountered heart-break after heart-break, it is otherwise. When Fortune comes their way offering gifts, they mistrust them as the gifts of the Danai. It is with them as with him who is haunted. He knows that the spectre lurks at hand, and when he is about to close his eyes, will start up and scare him; when he is merry will rise above the table and echo his laugh with a jeer. So do those who have been unlucky fear ever lest misfortune should spring on them from some unforeseen quarter, at some unprepared moment.

The dread lest there should be a revulsion in his affairs never wholly left Philip, and took the edge off his happiness. He had found little difficulty in acquiring the requisite understanding of the business, and obtaining a firm hold over the conduct of the factory. There was no prospect of decline in the trade. Since the conclusion of the European war, it had become brisk. Peace had created a demand for figured damasks. He had no reason to dread a cessation of orders, a slackness in the trade.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ALARM.

WITHIN a twelvemonth of his marriage Philip had been given one of the purest and best of the joys that spring out of matrimony—a child, a boy called after his own name, Philip; and the father loved his first-born, was proud of him, and was fearful lest the child should be snatched from him. As Polycrates was rendered uneasy because he was so powerful, rich, and happy, and cast his most costly jewel into the sea as a gift to the Fates, so was Philip inwardly disturbed with a suspicion that the gloomy, envious Fates which had harassed him so long were now only playing with him, and would exact of him some hostage. What would satisfy them? His commercial prosperity?—his child?—his health? In vain did Polycrates seek to propitiate the Fates by casting from him his most precious ring. The ring was returned to him in the belly of a fish, and kingdom and life were exacted of him.

'I never did understand what became of part of your mother's little property,' said Philip one evening when alone with Salome; 'and I think it odd that your mother should be reserved about it to me.'

'Oh, Philip! It does not matter. After all, it is only two hundred and fifty pounds, and the loss is mamma's, not yours.'

'It does matter, Salome. Two hundred and fifty pounds cannot have made themselves wings and flown away without leaving their address. Bo Peep's sheep left their tails behind them. This money ought to be accounted for. One thing I do know—the name of the person to whom it passed.'

'Who was that?'

'One Beaple Yeo. Have you any knowledge of

the man? Who is he? What had your mother to do with him?'

'I never heard his name before.'

'The money was drawn and paid to Beaple Yeo directly after the death of Uncle Jeremiah. I made inquiries at the bank, and ascertained this. Who Beaple Yeo is your mother will not say, nor why she paid this large sum of money to him. I would not complain of this reticence unless she had called me in to examine her affairs.'

'No, Philip, it was I who asked you to be so kind as to do for her the same as Uncle Jeremiah.'

'She is perfectly welcome to do what she likes with her money; but if she complains of a loss, and then seeks an investigation into her loss, and all the time throws impediments in the way of inquiry—I say that her conduct is not right. It is like a client calling in a solicitor and then refusing to state his case.'

'I was to blame,' said Salome meekly. 'Mamma has her little store—the savings she has put by—and a small sum left by my father, and I ought not to have interfered. She did not ask me to do so, and it was meddlesome of me to intervene unsolicited; but I did so with the best intentions. She had told me that she suffered from a loss which crippled her, and I assumed that her money matters had become confused, because no longer supervised. I ought to have asked her permission before speaking to you.'

'When I made the offer, she might have refused. I would not have been offended. What I do object to is the blowing of hot and cold with one breath.'

'I dare say she thought it very kind of you to propose to take the management; and there may have been a misunderstanding. She wished you to manage for the future and not inquire into the past.'

'Then she should have said so. She complained of

a loss, and became reticent and evasive when pressed as to the particulars of this alleged loss.'

'I think the matter may be dropped,' said Salome.

'By all means—only, understand—I am dissatisfied.'

'Hush!' exclaimed Salome. 'I hear baby crying.'

Then she rose to leave the room.

'Now look here,' said Philip, 'would it be fair to the doctor whom you call in about baby to withhold from him the particulars of the ailments you expect him to cure.'

'Never mind that now,' said Salome, and she kissed her husband to silence him. 'Baby is awake and is crying for me.'

This brief conversation will serve to let the reader see an unlovable feature in Philip's character. He possessed a peculiarity not common in men, that of harbouring a grievance and recurring to it. Men usually dismiss a matter that has annoyed them, and are unwilling to revert to it. It is otherwise with women, due to the sedentary life they lead at their needlework. Whilst their fingers are engaged with thread or knitting-pins, their minds turn over and over again little vexations, and roll them like snowballs into great grievances. Probably the solitary life Philip had led had tended to develop the same feminine faculty of harbouring and enlarging his grievances.

The front-door bell tingled. Salome did not leave the room to go after baby till she heard who had come. The door was thrown open upon them, and Mrs. Sidebottom burst in.

This good lady had thought proper to swallow her indignation at the marriage of Philip, because it was against her interest to be on bad terms with her nephew; and after the first ebullition of bad temper she changed her behaviour towards Philip and Salome,

and became gracious. They accepted her overtures with civility but without cordiality, and a decent appearance of friendship was maintained. She pressed Salome to visit her at York, with full knowledge that the invitation would be declined. Occasionally she came from York to see how the mill was working and what business was being transacted.

As she burst in on Philip and his wife, both noticed that she was greatly disturbed; her usual assurance was gone. She was distressed and downcast. Almost without a word of recognition cast to Salome, she pushed past her at the door, entered the room, ran to her nephew and exclaimed, 'Oh, Philip! You alone can help me. Have you heard? You do not know what has happened? I am sure you do not, or you would have come to York to my rescue.'

'What is the matter? Take a chair, Aunt Louisa.'

'What is the matter! Oh, my dear! I cannot sit, I am in such a nervous condition. It is positively awful. And poor Lamb a director. I am afraid it will damage his prospects.'

'But what has happened?'

'Oh—everything. Nothing so awful since the Fire of London and the Earthquake of Lisbon. And Smithies recommended it.'

'What—Smithies, whom you sent here to investigate the books?' asked Philip dryly.

'Oh, my dear! It is always best to do business in a business way. Of course, I don't distrust you, but I am sure it gratifies you that I should send my agent to run through the books.'

'Well, and what has your agent, Smithies, done now?'

'Oh, Smithies has done nothing himself. Smithies is as much concerned as myself. But he is to blame for advising me to sell my bonds in Indian railways and put the money into iodine or decimals, or something of that sort, and persuading Lamb to become a director of the company.'

'What company?'

'Oh! don't you know? The Iodinopolis Limited Liability Company. It promised to be a most successful speculation. It had an earl at the head. The company proposed to open quarries for stone, others for lime, erect houses, hotels, and churches, high and low, make a great harbour, and Beaple Yeo——'

'Who?'

'Beaple Yeo, the chief promoter and secretary, and treasurer *pro tem.* The speculation was certain to bring in twenty-five per cent., and he gave his personal security for seventeen.'

'And have you much capital in this concern?'

'Well—yes. The decimals grow thicker on this part of the coast than anywhere else in the world, and the decimals have an extraordinary healing effect in disease. They are cast up on the shore, and exhale a peculiar odour which is very stimulating. I have smelt the decimals myself—no, what am I saying, it is iodine, not decimals, but on my soul, I don't know exactly what the decimals are, but this I can tell you, they have run away with some good money of mine.'

'I do not understand yet.'

'How dense you are, Philip! For the sake of the iodine, we were going to build a city at or near Bridlington, to which all the sick people in Europe who could afford it, would troop. There was a crescent to be called after Lamb.'

'Well, has the land been bought on which to build and open the quarries?'

'No; that is the misfortune. Mr. Yeo has been unable to induce the landowners to sell, and so he has absconded with the money subscribed.'

'And is there no property on which to fall back?'

'Not an acre. What is to be done?'

Philip smiled. Now he understood what Mrs. Cusworth had done with her two hundred and fifty pounds.

She also had been induced to invest in iodine or decimals.

'What is to be done?' repeated Philip. 'Bear your loss.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SPARE ROOM.

PHILIP insisted on Mrs. Sidebottom seating herself, and giving him as connected and plain an account of the loss she had met with, as it was in her power to give. But to give a connected and plain account of anything affecting the interests deeply is not more easy for some persons than it is for a tipsy man to walk straight. They gesticulate in their narration, lurch and turn about in a whimsical manner. But Philip had been in a solicitor's office, and knew how to deal with narrators of their troubles. Whenever Mrs. Sidebottom swayed from the direct path, he pulled her back into it; when she attempted to turn round, or retrace her steps, he took her by the shoulders—metaphorically, of course—and set her face in the direction he intended her to go. Mr. Smithies was a man in whom Mrs. Sidebottom professed confidence, and whom she employed professionally to watch and worry her nephew; to examine the accounts of the business, so as to ensure her getting from it her share to the last farthing.

Introduced by Mr. Smithies, Mr. Beaple Yeo had found access to her house, and had gained her ear. He was a plausible man, with that self-confidence which imposes, and with whiskers elaborately rolled—themselves tokens and guarantees of respectability. He pretended to be highly connected, and to have intimate relations with the nobility. When he propounded his scheme, and showed how money was to

be made, when, moreover, he assured her that by taking part in the speculations of Iodinopolis she would be associated with the best of the aristocracy, then she entered eagerly, voraciously, into the scheme. She not only took up as many shares as she was able, but also insisted on the captain becoming a director.

'I have,' Mr. Beaple Yeo had told her, 'a score of special correspondents retained, ready, when I give the signal, to write up Iodinopolis in all the leading papers in town and throughout the north of England. I have arranged for illustrations in the pictorial periodicals, and for highly-coloured and artistic representations to be hung in the railway waiting-rooms. Success must crown our undertaking.'

When Philip heard the whole story, he was surprised that so promising a swindle should have collapsed so suddenly. He expressed this opinion to his aunt.

'Well,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'you see the managers could get hold of no land. If they could have done that, everything would have gone well. They intended to build a great harbour, and import their own timber, to open their own quarries for building-stone, and burn their own lime, and have their own tile-yards, so that they would have cut off all the profits of timber-merchants, quarry-owners, lime-burners, tile-makers, and gathered them into the pocket of the company.'

'And they have secured no land?'

'Not an acre. Mr. Beaple Yeo did his best, but when he found he could get no land, then he ran away with the money that had been paid up for shares.'

'And what steps have been taken to arrest him?'

'I don't know. I have left that with Smithies.'

'And how many persons have been defrauded?'

'I don't know. Perhaps Smithies does.'

'This is what I will do for you,' said Philip. 'Your loss is a serious one, and no time must be let slip without an attempt to stop the rascal with his loot. I will go at once to York, see Smithies, who, I suspect, has had his finger in the pie, and taken some of the plums to himself, and then on to Bridlington and see what can be done there. The police must be put on the alert.'

'In the meanwhile, if you and Salome have no objection, I will remain here,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I am terribly cut up, am rendered ill. My heart, you know, is subject to palpitations. When you return, I shall see you directly, and learn the result.'

'Very well,' said Philip, 'stay here. The spare room is vacant, and at your service.'

Then he went off, packed his portmanteau, and left the house. He was vexed with his aunt for her folly, but he could not deny her his assistance.

Mrs. Sidebottom shook her head when her nephew mentioned the spare bedroom, but said nothing about it till he had left the house. Then she expressed her views to Salome.

'No, thank you,' she said; 'no, indeed—indeed not. I could not be induced to sleep in that chamber. No; not a hot bottle and a fire combined could drive the chill out of it. Remember what associations I have connected with it. It was in that apartment that poor Jeremiah was laid after he had been recovered from the bottom of the canal. I could not sleep there. I could not sleep there, no, not if it were to insure me the recovery of all I have sunk on Iodinopolis and its decimals. I am a woman of finely-strung nature, with a perhaps perfervid imagination. Get me ready Philip's own room; I was in that once before, and it is very cosy—inside the study. No one occupies it now?'

'No; no one.'

'I shall be comfortable there. But—as for that

other bed — remembering what I do——' she shivered.

Salome admitted that her objection was justifiable, if not reasonable, and gave orders that the room should be prepared according to the wishes of Mrs. Sidebottom.

'A preciously dull time I shall have here,' said this lady, when alone in the room. 'I know no one in Mergatroyd, and I shall find no entertainment in the society of that old faded doll, Mrs. Cusworth, or in that of Salome, who, naturally, is wrapped up in her baby, and capable of talking of nothing else. I wonder whether there are any novels in the house?'

She went in search of Salome, and asked for some light reading.

'Oh, we have heaps of novels,' answered Salome. 'Janet has left them; she was always a novel-reader. I will bring you a basketful. But what do you say to a stroll? I must go out for an hour; the doctor has insisted on my taking a constitutional every day.'

'No, thank you,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'The wind is blowing, and your roads are stoned with glass clinkers ground into a horrible dust of glass needles that stab the eyes. I remember it. Besides, I am tired with my journey from York. I will sit in the arm-chair and read a novel, and perhaps doze.'

A fire was burning in the bedroom, another in the study. The former did not burn freely at first; puffs of wind occasionally sent whiffs of smoke out of the grate into the study. Mrs. Sidebottom moved from one room to the other, grumbling. One room was cold and the other smoky. Finally she elected to sit in the study. By opening the door on to the landing slightly, a draught was established which prevented the smoke from entering the room.

She threw herself into a rocking-chair, such as is found in every Yorkshire house, from that of the manufacturer to that of the mechanic.

'Bah!' groaned Mrs. Sidebottom, 'most of these books are about people that cannot interest me; low-class creatures such as one encounters daily in the street, and stands aside from. I don't want them in the boudoir. Oh! here is one to my taste—a military novel, by a lady, about officers, parades, and accoutrements.'

So she read languidly, shut her eyes, woke, read a little more, and shut her eyes again.

'I hear the front-door bell,' she said. 'No one to see me, so I need not say, "Not at home."'

Presently she heard voices in the room beneath her—the room given up to Mrs. Cusworth—one voice, distinctly that of a man.

The circumstance did not interest her, and she read on. She began to take some pleasure in the story. She had come on an account of a mess, and the colonel, some captains and lieutenants were introduced. The messroom conversation was given in full, according to what a woman novelist supposes it to be. Infinitely comical to the male reader are such revelations. The female novelist has a system on which she constructs her dialogue. She takes the talk of young girls in their coteries, and proceeds to transpose their thin, insipid twaddle into what she believes to be virile, pungent English, which is much like attempting to convert milk and water into rum punch. To effect this, to the stock are added a few oaths, a pinch of profanity, a spice of indecency, and then woman is grated over the whole, till it smacks of nothing else.

Out of kindness to fair authoresses, we will give them the staple topics that in real life go to make up after-dinner talk, whether in the messroom, or at the bencher's table, or round the squire's mahogany. And they shall be given in the order in which they stand in the male mind:

1. Horses.
2. Dogs.

3. Game.
4. Guns.
5. Cricket.
6. Politics.
7. 'Shop.'

Where in all this is Woman? Echo answers Where? Conceivably, when every other topic fails, she may be introduced, just in the same way as when all game is done, even rabbits, a trap and clay pigeons are brought out to be knocked over; so, possibly, a fine girl may be introduced into the conversation, sprung out of a trap—but only as a last resource, as a clay pigeon.

The house-door opened once more, this time without the bell being sounded—opened by a latch-key—and immediately Mrs. Sidebottom heard Salome's step in the hall. Salome did not go directly upstairs to remove her bonnet and kiss baby, but entered her mother's room.

Thereat a silence fell on the voices below—a silence that lasted a full minute, and then was broken by the plaintive pipe of the widow lady. She must have a long story to tell, thought Mrs. Sidebottom, who now put down her book, because she had arrived at three pages of description of a bungalow on the spurs of the Himalayas. Then she heard a cry from below, a cry as of pain or terror; and again the male voice was audible, mingled with that of the widow, raised as in expostulation, protest, or entreaty. At times the voices were loud, and then suddenly drowned.

Mrs. Sidebottom laid the book open on the table, turned down to keep her place.

'The doctor, I suppose,' she thought; 'and he has pronounced unfavourably of baby. Can't they accept his verdict and let him go? They cannot do good by talk. I never saw anything so disagreeable as mothers, except grandmothers. What a fuss they are making below about that baby!'

Presently she took up the book again and tried to read, but found herself listening to the voices below, and only rarely could she catch the tones of Salome. All the talking was done by her mother and the man —the doctor.

Then Mrs. Sidebottom heard the door of the widow's apartment open, and immediately after a tread on the stairs. Salome was no doubt ascending to the nursery, but not hurriedly—indeed, the tread was unlike that of Salome. Mrs. Sidebottom put the novel down once more at the description of a serpent-charmer, and went outside her door, moved by inquisitiveness.

'Is that the doctor below?' she asked, as she saw that Salome was mounting the stairs. 'What opinion does he give of little Phil?'

Then she noticed that a great change had come over her hostess. Salome was ascending painfully, with a hand on the banisters, drawing one foot up after the other as though she were suffering from partial paralysis. Her face was white as chalk, and her eyes dazed as those of a dreamer suddenly roused from sleep.

'What is it?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom again. 'Is baby worse?'

Salome turned her face to her, but did not answer. All life seemed to have fled from her, and she did not apparently hear the questions put to her. But she halted on the landing, her hand still on the banisters that rattled under the pressure, showing how she was trembling.

'You positively must tell me,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'What has the doctor said?'

But Salome, gathering up her energy, made a rush past her, ran up two or three steps, then relaxed her pace, and continued to mount, ascending the last portion of the stair as one climbing the final stretch of an Alpine peak, fagged, faint, doubtful whether his strength will hold out till he reach the apex.

Mrs. Sidebottom was offended.

'This is rude,' she muttered. 'But what is to be expected of a bagman's daughter?' She tossed her head and retreated to the study.

Reseating herself, she resumed her novel, but found no further interest in it.

'Why,' she exclaimed suddenly, 'the doctor has not been upstairs; he has not seen baby. This is quaint.'

Mrs. Cusworth did not appear at dinner. Salome told Mrs. Sidebottom that her mother was very, very ill, and prayed that she might be excused.

'Oh!' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I suppose the doctor called to see your mother, and not the baby. You are not chiefly anxious about the latter?'

'Baby is unwell, but mamma is seriously ill,' answered Salome, looking down at her plate.

'Her illness does not seem to have affected her conversational powers,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I heard her talking a great deal to the doctor; but perhaps that is one of the signs of fever—is she delirious?'

Salome made no reply. She maintained her place at table, deadly pale; and though, during dinner, she endeavoured to talk, it was clear that her mind was otherwise engaged.

Mrs. Sidebottom was thankful when dinner was over. 'Mrs. Philip will never make a hostess,' she said to herself. 'She is heavy and dull. You can't make lace out of stocking yarn.'

When Salome rose, Mrs. Sidebottom said, 'Do not let me detain you from your mother; and, by the way, I don't know if you have family prayers. I like them; they are good for the servants, and are a token of respectability—but you will excuse me if I do not attend. I am awfully interested in my novel, and tired after my journey—I shall go to bed.'

Mrs. Sidebottom did not, however, go to bed; she remained by the fire in the study, trying to read, and

speculating on Philip's chances of recovering part if not all of her lost money—chances which she admitted to herself were remote.

'There,' said she, 'the servants and the whole household are retreating to their roosts. They keep early hours here. I suppose Salome sleeps below with her mother. Goodness preserve me from anything happening to either the old woman or the baby whilst I am in the house. These sort of things upset the servants, and they send up at breakfast the eggs hardboiled, the toast burnt, and the tea made with water that has not been on the boil.'

Mrs. Sidebottom heaved a sigh.

'This is a stupid book after all,' she said, and laid down the novel. 'I shall go to bed. Bother Mr. Beaple Yeo.'

Beaple Yeo stood between Mrs. Sidebottom just now and every enjoyment. As she read her book Beaple Yeo forced himself into the story. At meals he spoiled the flavour of her food with iodine, and she knew but too surely that he would strew her bed with decimals and banish sleep.

Mrs. Sidebottom drew up the blind of her bedroom window and looked forth on the garden and the vale of the Keld, bathed in moonlight, a scene of peace and beauty. Mrs. Sidebottom was not a woman susceptible to the charms of nature. She was one of those persons to whom nothing is of interest, nothing has charm, virtue, or value, unless it affects themselves beneficially. She had not formulated to herself such a view of the universe, but practically it was this—the sun rises and sets for Mrs. Sidebottom; the moon pursues her silver path about Mrs. Sidebottom; for her all things were made, and all such things as do not revolve about, enrich, enliven, adorn, and nourish Mrs. Sidebottom are of no account whatever.

Now, as Mrs. Sidebottom looked forth she saw a dark figure in the garden; saw it ascend the steps

from the lower garden, cross the lawn, and disappear as it passed in the direction of the house out of the range of her vision. The figure was that of a man in a hat and surtout, carrying a walking-stick.

'What, now,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'this is comical. That man must have obtained admission through the locked garden door, like that other mysterious visitant, and he is coming here after everyone is gone to bed. Of course he will enter by the glass door. I suppose he is the doctor, and they let him come this way to visit the venerable fossil without disturbing the maids. I do hope nothing will happen to her. I should not, of course, wear mourning for her, but for baby I should have to make some acknowledgment, I suppose. Bother it.'

Mrs. Sidebottom went to bed. But, as Beaple Yeo had disturbed her day, so did he spoil her night. She slept indifferently. Beaple Yeo came to her in her dreams, and rubbed her with decimals, and woke her. But other considerations came along with Beaple Yeo to fret and rouse her. Mrs. Sidebottom was a woman of easy conscience. That which was good for herself was, therefore, right. But there are moments when the most obtuse and obfuscated consciences stretch themselves and open their eyes. And now, as she lay awake in the night, she thought of her brother Jeremiah, of the readiness with which she had identified his body, on the slenderest evidence. She might have made a mistake. Then, at once, the thought followed the course of all her ideas, and gravitated to herself. If she had made a mistake, and it should come out that she had made a wrong identification—would it hurt her?

On this followed another thought, also disquieting. How came Jeremiah's will to be without its signature? Should it ever transpire that this signature had been surreptitiously torn away, what would be the consequences to herself?

As she tossed on her bed, and was tormented, now by Beaple Yeo with his speculation, then by Jeremiah asking about his will, she thought that she heard snoring.

Did the sound issue from the room downstairs, tenanted by Mrs. Cusworth, or from the spare chamber?

Mrs. Sidebottom attempted to feel unconcern, but found that impossible. The snoring disturbed her, and it disturbed her the more because she could not satisfy herself whence the sound came.

'Perhaps it is the cook,' she said. 'She may be occupying the room overhead, and cooks are given to stertorous breathing. Standing over the stoves predisposes them to it.'

Finally, irritated, resolved to ascertain whence the sound proceeded, Mrs. Sidebottom left her bed. Her fire was burning. She did not light a candle. She drew on a dressing-gown, and stole into the study, and thence through the door (which, on account of the smoke, had been left ajar) upon the landing-place.

There she halted and listened.

The gaslight in the hall below was left burning but lowered all night, and the moon shone in through a window.

'I do believe the sound proceeds from the spare room,' she said, and softly she stole to the door and turned the handle.

'There can be no one there,' she thought, 'because I was offered the room, and yet the snoring certainly seems to proceed from it. No one can be there—this must be an acoustic delusion.'

Noiselessly, timidly, she half opened the door. The hinges did not creak. She looked in inquisitively.

The blind was drawn down, but the moon, shining through it, filled the room with suffused light.

Mrs. Sidebottom's eyes sought the bed. On it,

where had lain the body found in the canal, and much in the same position as that had been placed there, lay the figure of a man, black against the white coverlet, in a great-coat. The face was not visible—the curtain interposed and concealed it.

Mrs. Sidebottom's heart stood still. A sense of sickness and faintness stole over her. She dared not take a step further to obtain a glimpse of the face, and she feared to see it.

With trembling hand she closed the door, and stood on the landing with beating heart, recovering herself. 'What a fool I am to be frightened!' she said, after a minute, and with a sigh of relief. 'Of course—the doctor.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECOGNITION.

IN one of his essays, Goldsmith relates the anecdote of a painter who set up a picture in the market-place, with a pot of black paint and a brush beside it, and the inscription, 'Please indicate faults.'

When in the evening he revisited his picture, he found it smudged out eventually, as everyone had discovered and marked out a blemish. Next day he set up a replica of the picture, with paint and brush as before, and the incription, 'Please indicate beauties.'

By evening, the entire canvas was covered with black. Everyone had found a beauty, where previously everyone had detected a fault.

The modern novelist sends his work into the great forum, and without inviting, expects criticism. The printer's ink is always available wherewith to draw attention to his defects. In Goldsmith's apologue the critics found beauties, in the present they see only blemishes, which they dab at venomously, and the

sorrowful author sits at evening over his despised and bespattered production, bewildered, and ashamed to find that his earnest work, that has called out his most generous feelings, over which he has fagged and worn himself, is a mass of blunders a tissue of faults.

Now, one of the salient defects in the work of the author of this story, according to his reviewers, is that he makes his personages talk more smartly than they would naturally. But, he asks, would it be tolerable to the reader, would it be just to the printer—to force upon them the literal transcript of the ordinary conversation that passes between people every day? When we were schoolboys we had a pudding served to us on Wednesdays which we call milestone pudding, not because it was hard, but because it was a plum-pudding with a mile between the plums. Is there not a good mile between our *bons mots?* Is it legitimate art, is it kind, to make the reader pursue a conversation through several pages of talk void of thought, stuffed with matter of everyday interest? Is it not more artistic, and more humane, to steam the whole down to an essence, and then—well, add a grain of salt and a pinch of spice?

The reader shall be the judge. We will take the morning dialogue between Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome at breakfast.

'Good-morning, Mrs. Sidebottom.'

'I wish you good-morning, Salome.'

Author: Cannot that be taken for granted? May it not be struck out with advantage?

'I hope you slept well,' said Salome.

'Only so so. How is your poor mother?'

'Not much better, thank you.'

'And darling baby?'

'About the same. We have, indeed, a sick house. Tea or coffee, please?'

'Tea, please.'

'Sugar?'

'Sugar, please.'

'How many lumps?'

'Two will suffice.'

'I think you will find some grilled rabbit. Would you prefer buttered egg?'

'Thank you, rabbit,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'I will help myself.'

'I hope your room was comfortable. You must excuse us, we are all much upset in the house, servants as well as the rest. We have had a good deal to upset us of late, and when we are upset it upsets the servants too.'

Author: Now, there! Because we have dared to copy down, word for word, what was said at breakfast, our heroine has revealed herself as tautological. There were positively four upsets in that one little sentence. And we are convinced that if the reader had to express the same sentiment he or she would not be nice as to the literary form in which the sentence was couched, would not cast it thus—'We have been much upset; we have had much of late to disturb our equilibrium, and when we are thrown out of our balance then the servants as well are affected.' That would be better, no doubt, but the reader would not speak thus, and Salome did not.

The author must be allowed to exercise his judgment and give only as much of the conversation as is necessary, and not be obliged to record the grammatical slips, the clumsy constructions, the tedious repetitions that disfigure our ordinary conversation.

The English language is so simple in structure that it invites a profligate usage of it; it allows us to pour forth a flood of words without having first thought out what we intended to say. The sentences tumble higgledy-piggledy from our lips like children from an untidy nursery—some unclothed, one short of a shoe, and another over-hatted. Do we get the

Paliamentary debates as they were conducted? Where are the 'hems' and 'haws,' the 'I means' and 'you knows'? What has become in print of the vain repetitions and the unfinished sentences? Is not all that put into order by the judicious reporter? In like manner the novelist is armed with the reporter's powers, and exercising the same discretion passes the words of his creations through the same mill. Using, therefore, the privilege of a reporter, we will once more enter the gallery and take down the conversation that ensued at the breakfast-table between Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome.

'My dear Mrs. P.,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I hope that you were not obliged to call up the doctor in the night.'

'No,' answered Salome, raising her eyebrows.

'But what is the matter with your mother?'

'She has long suffered from heart complaint, and recently she has had much to trouble her. She has had a great shock and is really very unwell, and so is dear baby also; and between both and—and—other matters, I hardly know what I am about.'

'So I perceive,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'you have upset the cream.'

Salome had a worn and scared look. Her face had lost every particle of colour the day before. It remained as pale now. She looked as if she had not slept. Her eyes were sunken and red.

'My dear,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'never give in. If I had given in to all the trials that have beset me I should have been worn to fiddle-strings. My first real trial was the lost of Sidebottom, and the serious reduction of my income in consequence; for though he called a house an 'ouse, yet he was in good practice. There is a silver lining to every cloud. I don't suppose I could have got into good society so long as Sidebottom lived, with his dissipated habits about his *h*'s. His aspirate stood during our married life as a wall

between us, like that—like that which separated Pyramus from Thisbe.'

Salome made no answer.

'You can have no idea,' continued Mrs. Sidebottom, 'how startled I was in the night by the snoring of the doctor.'

'The doctor?' Salome looked up surprised.

'Yes—he slept, you know, in the spare room.'

A rush of crimson mounted to Salome's cheeks, and then faded from them, leaving them such an ashy gray as succeeds the Alpengluth on the snow peaks at sundown.

'Do you know?—well, really, I must confess my weakness—I was made quite nervous by the snoring. I was so anxious, naturally so anxious for your poor dear mother, and I thought the sounds might proceed from her, and if so I trembled lest they portended apoplexy. Then again, I could not make out whence the snoring proceeded. So, being of an inquiring mind—my dear, if we had not inquiring minds we should not have made Polar expeditions, and discovered the electric telegraph, and measured the distances of the planets—I was resolved to satisfy myself as to those sounds, and I stole out of my room and listened on the landing; and when I was satisfied that the snoring issued from the spare apartment, which I had supposed to be empty, I had the boldness to open the door and peep in.'

'At what o'clock?' asked Salome faintly.

'Oh! gracious goodness, I cannot tell. Somewhere in the small hours. You must know that as I looked out of my window before going to bed I saw the doctor coming through the garden. The moon was shining, and I adore the moon, so I stood at my window in quite a poetic frame. I suppose you told him to come through the garden so as not to disturb the household.'

Salome hesitated. She was trying to pour out a

second cup of tea for Mrs. Sidebottom, but her hand shook, and she was obliged to set down the pot. She breathed painfully, and looked at Mrs. Sidebottom with a daze of terror in her eyes.

'Thank you,' said the lady, 'I said I would have a little more tea. Bless me! How your feelings have overcome you. Family affection is charming, idyllic, but—don't spill the tea as you did the cream.'

'Would you kindly pour out for yourself?' asked Salome. 'It is true that my hand shakes. I am not very well this morning.'

'Delighted. As I was saying,' pursued Mrs. Sidebottom, drawing the teapot, sugar-basin, and cream-jug to herself—'as I was saying, in the small hours of the night I was aroused by the snoring and could not sleep. So I rose, and opened the spare room door and looked in.'

Salome's frightened eyes were riveted on her.

'I looked in, and saw a man lying on the bed. I could not see his face. The curtain was in the way, and there was no light save that of the moon. At first I was frightened, and inclined to cry out for sal-volatile, I was so faint. But after a moment or two I recovered myself. This man had on more clothing than—that other one. He wore boots and so on. After the first spasm of dismay I recovered myself, for I said, "It is the doctor sleeping in the house because Mrs. Cusworth is ill." It was the doctor, was it not?'

Salomè's scared face, her strange manner, now for the first time inspired Mrs. Sidebottom with the suspicion that she had not hit on the true solution of the mystery.

'But, goodness gracious me!' she exclaimed, 'if it was not the doctor, who could it be? And in the house at night—as on that former occasion—and when Philip is absent, too!'

Salome started from her seat.

'Excuse me,' she said hastily, 'I am—I am unwell.' She tottered to the door.

Mrs. Sidebottom, with kindled suspicion, rose also, and deserted an unfinished egg and some buttered toast to go after her. Salome had opened the door and passed through. Before she could close it behind her, Mrs. Sidebottom had grasped it and was at her heels, asking if she really were ill, and if she needed help.

At the same moment that both entered the hall, they saw a man descending the stairs, a man in hat and great-coat, with a leather bag in one hand and a cane in the other. He wore his hair long, and had dark whiskers, curled, but not in the freshest of curls. His nose was red, and his face mottled.

'Mr. Beaple Yeo!' shrieked Mrs. Sidebottom. 'My money! I want—I will have my money!'

The man stood for a moment irresolute on the stairs.

Then a key was turned in the front-door lock, and Philip appeared from the street—returned by an early train.

'Oh, Philip!' screamed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Here is the man—Beaple Yeo himself! Has been hiding in the spare bedroom all night. He has my money.'

In an instant, the man darted into Mrs. Cusworth's room, and locked the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXEUNT.

THE man descending the stairs had hesitated, and his hesitation had lost him. Had he made a dash at Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome, swept them aside and gone down the passage to the garden door, he would have escaped before Philip entered. But the sight of Mrs. Sidebottom, her vehement demand for her money,

made him turn from her and fly into Mrs. Cusworth's room. Thence he, no doubt, thought to escape to the garden, through the window.

For some moments, after Philip appeared and Mrs. Sidebottom had told him that the swindler was in his house, all three—he, Salome, and Mrs. Sidebottom, stood in the hall, silent.

Then a servant, alarmed by the cry, appeared from the kitchen, and Philip at once bade her hasten after a policeman.

Salome laid her hand on his arm and said supplicatingly, 'No, Philip; no, please!'

But he disregarded her intervention, and renewed the command to the servant, who at once disappeared to obey it.

Then he strode towards the door leading to Mrs. Cusworth's apartments, but Salome, quick as thought, threw herself in his way, and stood against the door, with outstretched arms.

'No, Philip; not—not, if you love me.'

'Why not?'—spoken sternly.

'Because——' She faltered, her face bowed on her bosom; then she recovered herself, looked him entreatingly in the eyes, and said, 'I will tell you afterwards—in private. I cannot now. Oh, Philip—I beseech you!'

'Salome,' said her husband very gravely, 'that man is in there.'

'I know, I know he is,' she answered timorously.

'Oh, Philip, don't mind her. He will get away, and he has my money!' entreated Mrs. Sidebottom on her part.

'Why do you seek to shelter him?' asked Philip of his wife, ignoring the words of his aunt.

'I cannot tell you now. Will you not trust me? Do allow him to escape.'

'Salome!' exclaimed Philip, in such a tone as made her shiver, it expressed so much indignation.

She could say no more in urgence of what she had asked, but looked at him steadily with her great imploring eyes.

Mrs. Sidebottom was not silent; she poured in a discharge of canister, and was cut short by Philip, who, turning sternly to her, said:

'I request your silence. The scoundrel cannot escape. The windows of both rooms are barred, because on the ground floor. He cannot break forth. I have him as in a trap. It is merely a question with me—which my wife must help me to decide—whether to burst open the door now, or wait till the arrival of the constable.'

Then Salome slowly, with heaving breast, and without taking her eyes off her husband's face, let fall her arms and stood back. But even then, as he put his foot against the door, she thrust forth her hand against Mrs. Sidebottom, and said: 'Not she! No, Philip, as you honour me! If you love me—not she!'

Then he turned and said to Mrs. Sidebottom: 'Aunt, I must ask you to remain in the hall. When the maid rings the front door bell, open and let her and the constable in, and bring them at once into Mrs. Cusworth's apartments. Do not enter before.'

He did not burst open the door till he had knocked thrice, and his knock had remained unnoticed. Then, with foot and shoulder against it, he drove it in, and the lock torn off fell on the floor. Instantly, Salome entered after him and shut the door behind her, and stood against it.

The old suspicion, sullenness, and doggedness which Philip had nurtured in him through long years of discouragement and distress, evil tempers that had been laid to sleep for a twelvemonth, rose full of energy to life again. He was angered at the thought that the wretch whom he was pursuing should have taken refuge under his own roof, and worst of all, that his own wife should spread out her arms to protect him.

The hero of a story should be without such blemishes that take from him all lustre and rob him of sympathy. But the reader must consider these evil passions in him as bred of his early experience. They grew necessarily in him, because the seed was sown in him when his heart was receptive, and rich to receive whatever crop was sown there. And again, we may ask: Is the reader free from evil tempers, constitutional or acquired? The history of life is the history of man mastering or being mastered by these; and such is the history of Philip.

In the sitting-room stood a scared group, looking at one another. Mrs. Cusworth by the fireplace, pale as chalk, hardly able to stand, unable to utter a word of explanation or protest, and Beaple Yeo, with his hat on, wearing a great-coat that Philip knew at once—that of his deceased uncle, holding a leather bag in his hand, to which a strap was attached that he was endeavouring to sling over his shoulder, but was incommoded by his cane, of which he did not let go. His face was mottled and his nose very purple—but he had not, like Mrs. Cusworth, lost his presence of mind.

Philip looked hard at him, then his face became hard as marble, and he said, 'So.—we meet—Schofield.'

The man had forgotten to remove his hat when attempting to put the strap over his head, and so failed; he at once hastily passed the cane into the hand that held the bag, and said with an air of forced joviality, as he extended his right palm, 'How d'y' do, my boy? glad to see you.'

'Put down that bag,' ordered Philip, ignoring the offered hand. 'Or, here, give it me.'

'No, thank y', my son; got my night togs in there—comb and brush and whisker-curlers.'

'Schofield,' said Philip grimly, 'I have sent for the constable. He will be here in two or three minutes. Give me up that bag. I shall have you arrested in this room.'

'No, you won't, my dear boy,' answered the fellow. 'But, by jove, it isn't kindly—not kindly—hardly what we look for in our children. But, Lord bless you! bless you, the world is becoming frightfully neglectful of the commandment with promise—with promise, my son.'

The impudence of the man, his audacity, and his manner, worked Philip into anger; not the cold bitter anger that had risen before, but hot and flaming.

'Come, no nonsense. Give me that bag now, or I'll take it from you. There is a warrant out for your arrest as Beaple Yeo.' He put his hand forward to snatch the bag from the fellow, but Beaple Yeo—or Schofield quickly brought his stick round.

'My pippin!' said he, 'take care; I have a needle in this, that will run you through if you touch me—though you are my son.'

Philip closed with him, wrenched the stick from him and placed it behind him. But Beaple would not be deprived of his weapon without an effort to recover it, and he made a rush at Philip to beat him aside, as he drew back, which would have led to a fresh test of strength, had not Salome thrown herself between them, and clinging to her husband said, 'Oh, Philip! Philip! He is my father!

Philip stood back, and he and Schofield faced each other in silence, the latter with his eye on Philip to note how he received the news. Philip grew grayer in tint, and every line in his face deepened; his eyes became more like Cairngorm stones than ever—cold, hard, almost inanimate.

'It is true,' said Schofield; 'my chuck has told you the fact—the very fact. Why should it have been kept from you so long?—so long? The Schofields are a family as good as the Pennycomequicks, and the name is not so much of a mouthfiller, which, at least, is a consolation—a consolation. Now, perhaps, son-in-law, you will allow me to step by? No?

Upon my word there would be something un-Christian —something to shock the moral sense even of an old Roman—a classic Roman—for a son-in-law to suffer his father to be arrested beneath his own roof. Besides, dear fellow, there are other considerations. You would hardly wish to have Pennycomequick's firm mixed up with Beaple Yeo, Esquire. It might, you know—you know—injure, compromise, and all that sort of thing—you understand——'

Philip turned to Mrs. Cusworth and asked her, 'Is it true, or—a lie?'

But the old lady was in no condition to answer. She opened her mouth and shut it, like a gasping fish, but no sound issued from her lips.

Then Salome recovered her composure and said, 'Philip! It is indeed true. He is my father. I am not, nor is Janet, her daughter. We are the twin children of her sister, who was married to—and then who was deserted by—this—this man Schofield. She took us, she and her dear good husband, and cared for us as their own—we did not know that we were not her children—that we were her nieces—we were not told.'

'Is this really true?' asked Philip, again looking at Mrs. Cusworth, and his face clouded with the blood that suffused it, but so far beneath the skin that it did not colour, it only darkened it. 'Is this true—or is it a lie told to persuade me to let this scoundrel escape? Either way it will lose its effect. I am just. I will give him over to suffer the consequences of his acts.'

Again Mrs. Cusworth tried to speak, but could not. She grasped at the mantelshelf; she could hardly stay herself from falling.

'Very well,' said Philip, looking fixedly at Schofield. 'Let us suppose that it is true; that I have been trifled with, deceived, dishonoured. Very well. We will suppose it is so. Then let it come out. I will be

no party to lying, dissimulation, to the screening of swindlers and scoundrels of any sort. My house is not a receiving house for stolen goods. I will return to the robbed that of which they have been despoiled. Hand me the bag.'

He spoke with a hard, metallic voice; scarce a trace of feeling was in it, save of the grate of animosity; his strong eye had no yielding in it, no light, only a sort of phosphorescent glimmer passing over it. He stooped, picked up the cane, and held it in his right hand, like a quarter-staff, and in his firm, knotted fist, cane though it was, it had the appearance of being a weapon capable of being used with deadly emphasis.

'Now, then,' said Philip, 'put down that bag; there, on the chair near me. Instantly.'

Schofield looked into his face and did not venture to disobey. The iron resolution, the forceful, earnest, the remorseless determination there were not to be trifled with. Schofield put down the bag as desired.

'The key.'

Sulkily, the fellow drew it from his trousers-pocket and flung it on the ground.

'Pick it up.'

Schofield hesitated. He would not stoop. He dreaded a blow on the head; on the back of the head, which would fell him if he stooped, such a blow as he would himself deal the man before him if he had a stick in his hand, and could induce him to bend at his feet.

As he hesitated, and a spark appeared in the eye of Philip, Salome stooped, rose, and handed the key to her husband.

He did not thank her. He did not look at her. He kept his eye steadily on Schofield — scarcely glancing at the bag as he opened it, and then only rapidly and cursorily at its contents—never for more than a second allowing it to be off his opponent,

never allowing him to move a muscle unobserved, never to frame a thought unread. But, for all the speed with which he glanced at the contents of the bag, he saw that it contained a great deal of money. It was stuffed with bank-notes, and the figures on these notes were high. Philip leisurely reclosed and relocked the bag, put the key in his pocket and passed the strap over his own head.

Then only did a slight, almost cruel smile, stir the corners of his lips as he saw the blankness of Schofield and the break-up of his assurance.

'Now, I suppose, I may go?' said the rogue.

'No,' answered Philip, 'I do nothing by half. I have my old scores against Schofield as well as the new scores—which are not my own—against Beaple Yeo.'

'But,' said the man, in a shaking voice, 'it will be so terribly bad for you to have the concern here mixed up with me—and you should consider that—the Bridlington scheme was a famous one, and was honest as the daylight. It must have rendered twenty-five per cent.—twenty-five as I am an honest man—and I should have become a millionaire. Then wouldn't you have been proud of me, eh?—it was a good scheme and must have answered, only who was to dream that no land could be bought?'

He eyed Philip craftily, then looked at the door, then again at Philip—as soon expect to find yielding in him as to see honey distil out of flint. So he turned to Salome. 'Speak a word for your father, child!' he said in a low tone.

Salome shrank from him and turned to Philip, who put out his steady hand and thrust her back, not roughly but firmly, towards Schofield.

Then in a sudden frenzy of fear and anger the fellow screamed, 'Will you let me pass?'

'The constable will be here directly, and then I will; not till then,' said Philip.

'Bah! the constable!' scoffed Schofield. 'You have sent to have a constable summoned. But where is he? Looking for a policeman is like searching for a text. You know he's somewhere, but can't for the life of you put your thumb on him. Look here, Philip,' he lowered his voice to a sort of whine; 'I'm awfully penitent for what I have done. Cut to the heart, gnawing of conscience, and all that sort of thing. It is a case of the prodigal father returning to the discreet and righteous son, and instead of running to meet me and help me, and giving me a good dinner—a good dinner, you know, and all that sort of thing, you threaten me with constables and conviction. I couldn't do it myself. 'Pon my word I couldn't. I suppose it is in us. I'm too much of a Christian—a true Christian, not a mere professor. I'm ashamed of you, Philip; I'm sorry for you. I sincerely am. I'm terribly afraid for you that you are the Pharisee, despising me the humble, penitent Publican.' The fellow was such a rascal that he could adapt himself to any complexion of man with whom he was, and he tried on this miserable cant with Philip in the hope that it would succeed. But as he watched his face, and saw no sign of alteration of purpose in it, he changed his tone, and said sullenly, with a savagery in the sullenness: 'Come, let me go; if I am brought to trial, I can tell you there will be pretty things come out, which neither you nor your wife will like to hear, and which will not suffer her to hold up her head very stiffly—eh?'

He saw that he had made Philip wince.

At that moment the house door-bell rang, and he heard that the police-constable had arrived.

He turned, went to the fireplace, grasped the poker, and swinging it above his head rushed upon Philip. Salome uttered a cry. Mrs. Cusworth's hand let go its grasp of the chimney-piece and she fell.

All happened in a moment—a blow of the poker on

Philip's arm—and Schofield was through the door and down the passage to the garden.

'Run after him, policeman, run!' screamed Mrs. Sidebottom, as she admitted the constable.

But Schofield had gained the start, and when the policeman reached the door in the wall of the lower garden he found it locked, and had to retrace his steps to the house. Time had been gained. No sooner was Schofield outside the garden than he relaxed his steps, and sauntered easily along the path till he reached the canal. He followed that till he arrived at a barge laden with coal, over the side of which leaned a woman, with a brown face, smoking a pipe.

'My lass!' said Schofield, 'I've summat to tell thee —in private;' and he jumped on board and went down the ladder into the little cabin.

The woman, Ann Dewis, slowly drew her pipe out of her mouth and went after him to the hatch, looked in, and said, 'What be 't, lad? Eh, Earle! Tha'rt come. Tak' t' pipe, I've kept it aleet a' these years. Ah sed ah would, and ah've done it.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

ESTRANGEMENT.

ONE! Two! Three!

Hark! on the church bell: then, again—

One! Two! Three!

'It is a woman or a little girl,' said those listening.

Then again—

One! Two! Three!

'A woman. Who can she be? Who is ill? But —how old?' Then, again, the bell—

One! Two! Three!————up to forty-six.

'Aged forty-six! Who can it be?'

Many faces appeared at the windows and doors of the street at Mergatroyd, and when the sexton emerged from the belfry, he was saluted with inquiries of, 'Who is dead? Forty-six years old—who can she be?'

'Mrs. Cusworth. Dropped dead with heart complaint.'

Now, in Yorkshire, when a man dies, then the bell tolls, Four, four, four; when a boy, then Four, four, two; when a woman dies, then as above, Thrice three; and when a girl, Three, three, two; after which, in each case, the age is tolled.

'Fiddlesticks!—you may say what you will, it *is* fiddlesticks,' said Mrs. Sidebottom impatiently. She was in the study with Philip. 'I never heard of anything so monstrous, so inhuman. I could not have believed it of you. And yet—after what I have seen, I can believe anything of you.'

Philip was unmoved. 'The plunder of that wretched fellow,' he said unconcernedly, 'shall be placed in proper hands. How much there is I cannot now say, and I do not know how many persons he has defrauded, and to what an extent. Whether all will get back everything is not certain; probably they will receive a part, perhaps a large part, but not all.'

'It is preposterous!' burst in Mrs. Sidebottom, 'I have been the means of catching him. No one would have had a farthing back but for my promptitude, my energy, and my cleverness. Did not I track him here, and act as his gaoler, and drive him into a corner whilst you secured the money? And you say that I am to share losses equally with the rest! No such a thing. I shall have my money back in full; and the rest may make the best of what remains, and thank me for getting them that. As for what you say, Philip, I don't care who hears me, I say it *is fiddlesticks*—it *is* fiddlestick-ends.'

'I should have supposed, Aunt Louisa, that by this

time you would have known that when I say a thing I mean it, and if I mean a thing I intend to carry it out unaltered.' Then after a pause: 'And now I am sorry to seem inhospitable, but under the painful circumstances—with death again in this house, and with my child ill, I am obliged to recommend you to return at once to York, and when there, not again to consult Mr. Smithies. It is more than probable that this reliable man of business of yours, whom you set to watch me, has sold you to that rascal Beaple Yeo —or whatever his name be.'

'Oh, gracious goodness!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'To be sure I will return to York. I wouldn't for the world incommode you in a house of mourning. I know what it is; the servants off such heads as they have, which are heads of hair and nothing else, and everything in confusion, and only tongues going. I wouldn't stay with you at this most trying time, Philip, not for worlds. I shall be off by the next train.'

Philip was left to himself.

His wife was either upstairs with the baby, or was below with the corpse of one whom she had looked up to and loved as a mother. Surely it was his place to go to her, draw her into the room where they could be by themselves, put his arm about her, and let her rest her head on his breast and weep, to the relief of her burdened heart.

But Philip made no movement to go to his wife.

She was alone, without a friend in the house. Her sister was away, her baby was ill. A death entails many things that have to be considered, arranged, and provided. Philip knew this. He sent word to the registrar of the death; he did nothing more to assist Salome. He rang the bell, and when after a long time a servant replied to the summons, he gave orders that clean sheets should be put on the bed lately occupied by Mrs. Sidebottom. He would, he said for awhile, sleep there.

Did it occur to Philip that there was cruelty in leaving his young wife alone at night, with a sick baby, and with the body of the woman, who had been to her as a mother, lying waiting for burial downstairs? Did it occur to him that she might feel infinite desolation at night, if he were away from her? He thought only of himself, of the wrong done to him.

'She married me, and never told me who she was. She married me, lying under a false name.'

Salome had not realized, indeed, had not perceived, how deep and fatal a rift had been cloven in her relations with Philip. The fall of her mother, the efforts to restore life, the arrival of the doctor, the conviction struggled against but finally submitted to that life was extinct, had concentrated and engrossed all her faculties. Then, when she knew that death was again in the house, there sprang out of that knowledge many imperious duties that exacted of Salome full attention and much thought. Mrs. Sidebottom had volunteered no help. Upon Salome everything depended. She had not the time to consider how Philip would take the startling revelation made to him. Salome was not one to give up herself to emotion. She braced herself to the discharge of the duties that devolved on her. Quiet, very pale, and hollow-eyed, she went about the house. From the nursery she found that the nurse had escaped, deserting the baby, that she might talk over the events that had occurred in the kitchen. The cook, Salome found, had made the pastry with washing instead of baking powder, and the housemaid had found too much to talk about to make the beds by four o'clock in the afternoon.

Only, when everything in the house had been seen to, a woman provided to attend to the dead, and all the trains off their lines set on them again, only then could Salome sit down and write to her sister of their common loss.

After this was done she wrote a few notes to friends, and then, lacking stamps, came with the packet to Philip's door.

He was seated at his secretaire writing, or pretending to write, with his brows bent, when he heard her distinct and gentle tap at the door. He knew her tap, it was like that of no one else, and he called to her to enter.

'My dear,' she said, 'I have not been able to come to you before. I have had so much to do; and—dear, I have wanted to speak to you; but, as you know, in such a case as this, personal wants must be set aside. Have you any stamps? I require a foreign one.'

He hardly looked up from the desk, but signed with the quill that she should shut the door. He was always somewhat imperious in his manner.

She shut the door, and came over to him, and laid the letters on his desk.

'You will stamp them for me, dear?' she said, and rested her hand lightly on his shoulder.

Then she saw how stern and set his face was, and a great terror came over her.

'Oh, Philip!' she said; and then, 'I know what you are taking to heart, but there is no changing the past, Philip.'

Sometimes we have seen the reflection of the sun in rippled waters out of doors sent within on the ceiling. How it dances; is here and there; now extinct, then once more it flashes out in full brilliancy. So was it with the colour in Salome's face; it started to one cheek, burnt there a moment, then went to the temples, then died away wholly, and in another moment was full in her face, the next to leave it ashy pale. Her voice also quivered along with the colour in her face, in rhythmic accord. Philip withdrew his shoulder from the pressure of her hand, and slowly stood up.

'I shall be obliged if you will take a ch: 'r,' said he formally, 'as I desire an interview, but will undertake to curtail it as much as possible, as likely to be painful to both.'

She allowed her hand to fall back, and then drew away a step. She would not take a chair, as he had risen from his.

'Philip,' she said, 'I am ready to hear all you have to say.'

She spoke with her usual self-possession. She knew that they must have an explanation about what had come out. There was always something in her voice that pleased; it was clear and soft, and the words were spoken with distinctness. In nothing, neither in dress, in movement, nor in speech, was there any slovenliness in Salome. There was some perceptible yet indefinable quality in her voice which at once reached the heart.

Philip felt this, but put the feeling from him, as he had her hand.

'Salome,' said he, not looking at her, except momentarily, 'a cruel trick has been played on me.'

'Philip,' said she quietly but pleadingly, 'that man, as I told you, is my father, but I did not know it till yesterday. I had no idea but that I was the daughter of those who had brought me here, and who gave themselves out to be my parents. I will tell you what I know, but that is not much. He—I mean that man—had married my mother, who was the sister of her who is below, dead. He got into trouble somehow; I do not know what kind of trouble it was, but it was, I suppose, a disgraceful one, for he had to leave the country, and it was thought he would not venture back to England. My real mother, grieved at the shame, died and left us to her sister, who with her husband, Mr. Cusworth, cheerfully undertook the care of us, adopted us as their own, and when they came here shortly after, gave out that we were their children,

partly to save us the pain of knowing that our father had been a——well, what he was, partly also to screen us from his pursuit should he return, and also, no doubt, the more to attach us to themselves. As you know, shortly before Mr. Cusworth, our reputed father, was to be taken into partnership, a terrible accident happened and he was killed. Janet and I do not remember him. Since then mamma—I mean my aunt—and we children lived in this house with dear, kind, Uncle Jeremiah. Whether he knew the truth about us I have not been told. We never had any doubt that she whom we loved and respected as a mother was our real mother. Then, on the occasion of the terrible flood and the death of Uncle Jeremiah, or just after, he—I mean our father—reappeared suddenly, and without having let mamma know that he was yet alive. He came here in great destitution, wanted money, and even clothing. Mamma—you know whom I mean, really aunt—she was in great straits what to do. She did not venture openly to allow him to appear, and she suffered him to visit her secretly through the lower garden-door, and to come to her sitting-room ; she gave him money and he went away. That was how her two hundred and fifty pounds went, about which you asked so many questions, and which she was afraid of your inquiring too much about. My father had then assumed the name of Beaple Yeo. She also allowed him to take uncle's great-coat and hat, which were laid out in the spare room for distribution. You told her to dispose of them as she saw fit.'

Philip hastily raised his hand.

Mrs. Sidebottom had hit the right nail on the head in her explanation of that mysterious visit to his house —and then he had scouted her explanation. He lowered his hand again, and Salome, who had supposed that he desired to speak, and had stopped, resumed what she was relating. 'Mamma heard

nothing more of him after that till yesterday, when he reappeared. He was, he said, again in trouble, which meant, this time, that he must leave the country to avoid imprisonment. But he was not in a hurry to leave too hastily; he would wait till the vigilance of the police was relaxed, nor would he go in the direction they expected him to take. He had come, he said, to ascertain Janet's address. He intended, he said, to go to her. My mother refused to give it. I trust she remained firm in her refusal, but of that I am not sure. He said that if I had not been married he would have carried me off with him; it would not be so dull for him if he had a daughter as a companion. Janet knew about him and her relationship to him. I did not. When he came here first of all, Janet was in my mother's room, and the matter could not be concealed from her.'

'Do you mean seriously to tell me that till yesterday you were ignorant of all this?'

'Yes.'

'Ignorant when you married me that your name was Schofield, and not Cusworth?'

'Of course, Philip; of course.' She spoke with a leap of surprise in her tone and in her eyes. It was a surprise to her that he should for a moment suppose it possible that she was capable of deceiving him, that he could think her other than truthful.

'Then at that first visit you were told nothing; only Janet was let into the secret?'

'Yes, dear Philip.'

'What! the giddy, light-hearted Janet was made a confidante in a matter of such importance, and you the clear of intellect, prompt in action, close of counsel, were left in the dark? It is incredible.'

'But it is true, Philip.'

Thereupon ensued silence.

She looked steadily at him with her frank eyes.

'Surely, Philip, you do not doubt my word?

Mamma only told Janet because the secret could not be kept from her. At that time my sister slept in mamma's room, and spent the greater part of the day with her, so that it was not possible to keep from her the sudden arrival of—of him.' She shuddered at the thought of the man who was her father. She put her hands over her face that burnt with an instantaneous blaze, but withdrew them again directly, to say vehemently, 'But, Philip, surely it cannot be. You do not doubt me?' She looked searchingly at him. '*Me!*'

He made no reply. His face was set. Not a muscle moved in it.

'Philip!' she said, with a catch of pain—a sudden spasm in her heart and throat. 'Philip, the sense of degradation that has come on me since I have known the truth has been almost more than I could bear. Not because of myself. What God sends me, that I shall find the strength to bear. I am nobody, and if I find that I am the child of someone worse than nobody—I must endure it. What crushes me is the sense of the shame I have brought on you, Philip, and the sorrow that a touch of dishonour should come to you through me. But I cannot help it. There is no way out of it. It has come on us without fault of ours, and we must bear it—bear it together. I'—she spread out her hands—'I would lay down my life to save you from anything that might hurt you, that might grieve your proud and honourable spirit. But, Philip, I can do nothing. I cannot unmake the fact that I am his daughter and your wife.'

'I shall never, never forgive that the truth was kept from me. The marriage was a fraud practised on me.'

'My dear mother—you know whom I mean—acted with the kindest intentions, but I cannot excuse her for not speaking.'

'Janet knew, as you tell me, and she said nothing.'

'Mamma urged her to remain silent.'

'I was sacrificed,' said Philip bitterly. 'Upon my word, this is a family that transmits from one generation to another the fine art of hoaxing the unsuspicious.'

'Philip!' A rush of indignant blood mantled her face, and then left it again. She heaved a sigh, and said, 'If I had known before I married you whose daughter I was I would on no account have taken you. I would have taken no honest man for his own sake, no other for my own.'

'You know what Schofield was to me—to me above every man. I can recall when I told you and Janet and your mother how he had embittered my life, how he had ruined my father—and you all kept silence.'

'Philip, you are mistaken; I never heard that.'

'At all events your mother and Janet heard me—heard me when they knew I was engaged to you, and they told me nothing. It was infamous, unpardonable. They knew how I hated that man before I was married. They knew that I would rather have become allied to a Hottentot than to such an one as he. They let me marry you in ignorance—it was a fraud; and how, I ask'—he raised his voice in boiling anger—'how can I trust *you* when you profess your ignorance?' He sprang to his feet and walked across the room. 'I don't believe in your innocence. It was a base, a vile plot hatched between you all, Schofield and the rest of you. Here am I—just set on my feet and pushing my way in an honest business, and find myself bound by an indissoluble bond to the daughter of the biggest scoundrel on the face of the globe.'

Salome did not speak. To speak would be in vain. He was furious; he had lost his trust in her.

She began to tremble, as she had trembled when Mrs. Sidebottom had seen her on the stairs—a convulsive shivering extending from the shuddering heart outwards to the extremities, so that every hair on her head quivered, every fold in her gown.

'And now,' pursued Philip, 'the taint is transmitted to my child. It might have been endurable had I stood alone. It is intolerable now. These things run in the blood like maladies.'

She was nigh on fainting; she lifted one hand slightly in protest; but he was too angry to attend to any protest.

'Can I doubt it? The clever swindler defrauded my father, and the clever daughter uses the inherited arts and swindles the son. How do I know but that the same falsehood, low, cunning, and base propensities may not lurk inherent in my child, to break out in time and make me curse the day that I gave to the world another edition of Beaple Yeo, alias Schofield, bearing my hitherto untarnished name?'

Then she turned and walked to the door, with her hands extended as one blind, stepping slowly, stiffly, as if fearful of stumbling over some unseen obstacle. She went out, and he, looking sullenly after her, saw of her only the white fingers holding the door, and drawing it ajar, and trying vainly to shut it, pinching them in so doing, showing how dazed she was—instinctively trying to shut the door, and too lost to what she was about to see how to do it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLIGHT OF EROS.

THE funeral of Mrs. Cusworth was over.

The blinds were drawn up at last.

When the service at the grave was concluded, Philip and Salome returned to their home, if that may be called home from which the elements that go to make up home—trust, sympathy, pity, forgiveness—have fled.

The sun streamed in at the windows, broke in with

a rude impatience, as the blinds mounted, and revelled on the floors again, and reflected itself in glass and gilding and china, brought out into bloom again the faded flowers on the carpets, and insisted on the bunches of roses and jessamine and nondescripts on the wall-papers putting on their colours and pretence of beauty.

But there was no sunshine streaming into the shadowed hearts of Philip and Salome, because over both the hand of Philip held down the blinds.

Philip, always cold, uncommunicative, allowing no one to lay finger on his pulse, resenting the slightest allusion to his life apart from business—Philip had made no friend in Mergatroyd, only acquaintances—drew closer about him the folds of reserve.

At one time much fuss was made about the spleen, but we have come now to disregard it, to hold it as something not to be reckoned with; and Philip regarded the heart as we do our spleens.

Philip was respected, but was not popular with his own class, and was respected, but not popular, among the operatives of his mill. Some men, however self-contained, are self-revealing in their efforts after concealment. So was it with Philip.

Shrewd public opinion in Mergatroyd had gauged and weighed him before he supposed that it was concerned about him. It pronounced him proud and honest, and capable, through integrity of purpose, of doing a cruel, even a mean, thing. He had been brought up apart from those modifying forces which affect, or ought to affect, the conduct governed by principle. Principle is a good thing as a direction of the course of conduct, but principle must swerve occasionally to save it from becoming a destructive force. In the solar system every planet has its orbit, but every orbit has its deflections caused by the presence of fellow planets. Philip as a child had never lain with his head on a gentle bosom, from which, as from

a battery, love had streamed, enveloping him, vivifying, warming the seeds of good in him. He reckoned with his fellow-men as with pieces of mechanism, to be used or thrown aside, as they served or failed. He had been treated in that way himself, and he had come to regard such a cold, systematic, material manner of dealing with his brother men as the law of social life.

That must have been a strange experience—the coming to life of the marble statue created by Pygmalion. How long did it take the veins in the alabaster to liquefy? How long before the stony breast heaved and pulsation came into the rigid heart? How long before light kindled in the blank eye, and how long before in that eye stood the testimony to perfect liquefication, a tear?

There must have been in Galatea from the outset great deficiency in emotion, inflexibility of mind, absence of impulse; a stony way of thinking of others, speaking of others, dealing with others; an ever-present supposition that everyone else is, has been, or ought to be—stone.

Philip had only recently begun to mollify under the influence of Salome. But the change had not been radical. The softening had not extended far below the surface, had not reached the hard nerves of principle.

In the society of his wife, Philip had shown himself in a light in which no one else saw him. As the sun makes certain flowers expand, and these flowers close the instant the sun is withdrawn, so was it with him. He was cheerful, easy, natural with her, talked and laughed and showed her attentions; but when he came forth into the outer world again he exhibited no signs of having unfurled.

Now that his confidence in his wife was shaken, Philip was close, undemonstrative, in her presence as in that of his fellows. He was not the man to make allowances, to weigh degrees of fault. Allowances

had not been made for his shortcomings in his past life, and why should he deal with Salome as he had not been dealt by? Fault is fault, whether in the grain or in the ounce.

When Philip said the prayer of prayers at family devotions, and came to the petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,' he had no qualms of conscience, not a suspicion that his conduct was ungenerous.

He forgave Salome—most certainly he forgave her. He bore no malice against her for having deceived him. He was ready to make her an allowance of forty pounds per annum for her clothing, and thirty pounds for pocket or pin money. Should she fall ill, he would call in a specialist regardless of expense; if she wanted to refurnish the drawing-room he would not grudge the cost. Would a man be ready to do all this unless he forgave a trespass against him? He could not take her head, and lay it on his shoulder, and stroke the golden hair, and kiss the tears from her eyes—but then he did not ask of Heaven to pet and mollycoddle him, only to forgive him, and he did forgive Salome.

He saw that his wife's heart ached for her mother; that she felt keenly the loss of her who had been to her the representative of all maternal tenderness and consideration. That was natural and inevitable. But everyone has to undergo some such partings; it is the lot of humanity, and Salome must accommodate herself to her bereavement. He saw that she was without an intimate friend in the place, to whom she could pour out her heart, and of whom take counsel; but then, he also had been friendless, till he came not to require a friend and to value sympathy. What he did not appreciate, she must learn to do without.

He saw that she was distressed and in agony of mind because he was offended with her; but this afforded him no regret. She had sinned against him and must

accept the consequences. It was a law of nature that sin should meet with punishment, and the sinner must accept his chastisement as his due. What were the consequences in comparison with the weight of her transgression?

Procrustes had a bed on which he tied travellers, and if their length exceeded that of the bed he cut off their extremities; but if they were shorter, he had them stretched to equal it. Philip had his iron bed of principle, on which he extended himself, and to this he would fit his poor, tender, suffering wife.

As he and Salome returned together from the funeral they hardly spoke to each other on the way. Her hand was on his arm, trembling with grief and mute, disregarded appeal. He knew that she was crying, because she continually put her kerchief to her eyes. Tears are a matter of course at funerals, as orange-blossoms are a concomitant of weddings. Mrs. Cusworth, though not Salome's mother, had stood to her for eighteen years in the relation of one; tears, therefore, thought Philip, were proper on this occasion—very proper.

He did not blame her for crying—God forbid!

For his own part, Philip had regarded Mrs. Cusworth with dislike; he had seen how commonplace, unintellectual a woman she was; but it was of course right, quite right and proper, that Salome should see the good side of the deceased.

Philip wore his stereotyped business face at the funeral, the face he wore when going through his accounts, hearing a sermon, reprimanding a clerk, paying his rates. He was somewhat paler than usual, but the most attentive observer could not say that this was caused by feeling and was not the effect of contrast to his new suit of glossy black mourning. Not once did he draw the little hand on his arm close to his side and press it. He let it rest there with as much indifference as if it were his paletôt.

On reaching the house, he opened the door with his latchkey, and stood aside to allow Salome to enter. Then he followed, hung his hat on the stand, ~~and blew his nose.~~ He had avoided blowing his nose at the grave or in the street, lest it should give occasion to his being supposed to affect a grief he did not feel; and Philip was too honest to pretend what was unreal, and afraid to be thought to pretend.

He followed Salome upstairs.

On reaching the landing where was his study door, Salome turned to look at him before ascending further. Her face was white, her eyes red with weeping. Wondrously beautiful in colour and reflected light was her ruddy gold hair bursting out from under the crape bonnet above her pallid face.

She said nothing, but waited expectantly, with her brown eyes on his face. He received the look with imperturbable self-restraint, opened his door, and without a word went into his study.

Salome's bosom heaved, a great sob broke from it; and then she hastily continued her ascent. She had made her final appeal, and it had been rejected.

Mrs. Cusworth had died worth an inconsiderable sum, and that she had left to Janet, as more likely to need it than Salome.

And now that the last rites had been paid to the kindhearted, if stupid and illiterate old woman, who had loved Salome as her own child, Salome turned to her baby to pour forth upon it, undivided, the rich torrent of her love, gushing tinged with blood from a wounded heart.

There exists a sympathetic tie in nature and in human relations of which Philip had never thought—that between the mother and the babe. And now the wrong done to the mother reacted, revenged itself on her child. The little one had been ailing for awhile, now it became seriously ill. The strain to which Salome had been put made itself felt in the weak

frame of the infant that clung to her breast. Salome would allow no one to nurse her darling but herself whilst its precious life was in danger, and the child would, on its part, allow no one else to touch it. It sobbed and cried and demanded of its mother infinite patience and pity, unwearied rocking in her arms and hugging to her heart, a thousand kisses, and many tears, words of infinite love and soothing addressed to it, soft sighs breathed over it from an utterly weary bosom, and earnest prayers, voiceless often, but ever ascending, as the steam of the earth to heaven.

For awhile, care for the babe excluded all other thoughts, devoured all other cares. Through the long still night Salome was by her child; she did not go to bed, she sat in the room by its crib, sometimes taking it on her lap, in her arms, then, when it was composed to sleep, laying it again in its cradle. She heard every stroke of the clock at every hour. She could not sleep, she could but watch and pray.

Every hour or two Philip came to inquire after his child. He stood by the cradle when it was sleeping there, stooped and looked at the flushed face and the little clenched hands; but when it was on Salome's lap or in her arms he did not come so near, he stood apart, and instead of examining the child himself, asked about it. Salome controlled herself from giving way to feeling; her composure, the confidence with which she acted, impressed Philip with the idea that she had got over all other troubles except that caused by the child's illness; and were this to pass that she would be herself again.

But, through all her thought for the child ran the burning, torturing recollection of what Philip had said concerning it. She was not sure that he desired that it should live—live to grow up a Beaple Yeo—a Schofield. The house was perfectly still. All the servants were asleep. Only Salome was awake upstairs, when at four o'clock in the morning, as the day

was beginning to break raw and gray in the east, and to look wanly in through the blind into the sick room —Philip entered.

Salome was kneeling by the crib—a swing crib of wood on two pillars. She knelt by it, she had been rocking, rocking, rocking, till she could no more stir an arm. Aching in all her joints, with her pulses hammering in her weary brain, she had laid both hands on the crib side, and her brow against it also. Was she asleep, or was she only fagged out and had slidden into momentary unconsciousness through exhaustion of power? Her beautiful copper hair, burnished in every hair, reflected the light of the lamp on the dressing-table. On one delicate white finger was the golden hoop. She did not hear Philip as he entered. Hitherto, whenever he had come through the door, she had looked up at him wistfully. Now only she did not, she remained by the crib, holding to it, leaning her brow on it, and tilting it somewhat on one side.

He stood by her, and looked down on her, and for awhile a softness came over his heart, a stirring in its dead chambers as of returning life. He saw how worn out she was. He saw that she who had been so hearty, so strong, in a few days had become thin and frail in appearance, that the fresh colour had gone from her cheek, the brightness from her eye, that the sweet dimple had left her mouth. He saw her love and self-devotion for her child, the completeness with which her soul was bound up in it. And he saw how lonely she now was without her mother to talk to about the maladies, the acquirements, and the beauty of her darling.

She did not glance up at that moment, or she would have seen tokens of melting in his cold eye.

He remained standing by her, and he looked at the child now sleeping quietly. It was better, he trusted. It could hardly be so still unless it was better.

Then, all at once, Salome recovered consciousness, saw him, and said, 'Oh, Philip, you do not want him to die?'

Philip drew himself up.

'You have the crib too much tilted,' he said. He put his hands to it to counterbalance her weight, but she raised her head from the side and the crib righted itself. He still kept his hand where he had placed it, without any reason for so doing.

'Philip,' she said again, with passionate entreaty in her voice, 'you do not wish my darling to die?'

'How can you ask such a foolish question!' he answered. 'I am afraid the long night-watching has been too much for you.'

'Oh, Philip—you do love him? You do love him—although there is something of me in him. But——' she said hastily, 'he is mostly yours. He is like you, he has dark hair and eyes, and his name is Philip, and of course he *is*, he is a Pennycomequick! Oh, Philip! You love him dearly?'

'Of course I love him; he is my child. Why do you doubt?'

'Because,' she said, 'I—I am his mother. But that is all—I am only a sort of superior nurse. He is a Pennycomequick through and through, and there is no—no—nothing of what you dread in him.'

'Yes, he is a Pennycomequick.'

'He can, he will be no other than a good and noble man. He can, he will be that, if God spares him.'

'So I trust.'

'Oh, Philip—he is better, so much better. I am sure there is a turn. I thank God—indeed, indeed I do. Look at his dear little face; it is cool again.'

He had his hand on the side of the crib, and he stooped to look at the sleeping babe. And, as he was so doing, Salome, who still knelt, put her lips timidly to his hand and kissed it—kissed it as it rested on the side of her babe's crib.

Then he withdrew his hand. He took his kerchief out of his pocket, wiped it, said coldly, 'Yes, the child is better,' and left the room.

Philip went to bed. He had not asked Salome if she were going to rest, he had not called up the nurse to relieve her, though he saw and admitted that she was worn out. He had withdrawn his hand from her lips not with intention to hurt her, but to show her that he was opposed to sentimentality, and not inclined to be cajoled into a renewal of confidence by such arts. That which angered and embittered him chiefly was the fact that he was tied to a woman of such disreputable parentage. Then, in the next place, he could not forgive the fraud practised on him in making him marry her in ignorance of her real origin. He did not investigate the question whether Salome were privy to it. He thought that it was hardly possible she could have been kept in complete ignorance of the truth. It was known to her sister. Some suspicion of it at least must have been entertained by her. A fraud, a scandalous one, had been perpetrated—on her own showing by her sister and reputed mother—and even supposing she were not guilty of taking share in it, she must reap the consequences of the acts of her nearest relatives. Mrs. Cusworth and Mrs. Baynes were beyond the reach of his anger, therefore it must fall on the one accessible.

Salome had acquired by marriage with him a good position and a comfortable home, and it was conceivable that for the sake of these prospective advantages she would have acquiesced, if not actually concurring, in the wretched mean plot which had led to his connection with her—the daughter of the most despicable of men, and his own personal enemy.

Philip went to bed and fell asleep, satisfied with himself that he had acted aright, and that suffering was necessary to Salome to make her feel the baseness of her conduct.

Salome finding that the child fretted, took it out of the cot, drew it to her bosom, and seated herself by the window. She had raised the blind and looked out at the silvery morning light breaking in the east, and the pale east was not more wan than her own face. When Psyche let fall the drop of burning wax on the shoulder of Cupid, the god of Love leaped up, spread his wings and fled. Psyche stood at the window watching his receding form, not knowing whither he went, but knowing that he went from her without prospect of return. So now did Salome look from the window gazing forth into the cold sky, looking after lost love—gone—gone, apparently, past recall.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EXILE.

DAYS passed, and the house had settled into formal ways. The meals were at the usual hours, to the minute. Philip went to the office at the usual time, and at the usual time returned from it; everything had again entered into its routine as before. But the relations between husband and wife were not improved. They met at meals, rarely else. At table a conventional conversation was maintained. Philip occupied his bachelor apartments, and expressed no intention of leaving them. Beyond the formal inquiries after Salome's health in the morning, he took no interest in her condition of mind and body. He did not perceive that she still suffered, was becoming thin, pale, and worn. He could not have invented a more cruel torture than this daily life of chill intercourse between them, and Salome felt that it was becoming insupportable. She attended to the household duties. She looked after his comforts, saw that his room was properly dusted, that his papers, his

books were always in the same place, that his clothing was in order, that strict punctuality was observed in all that concerned him—he accepted this as of course, and was unaware that every element that conduced to his well-being was not present naturally. He did not know that his wife entered his room when he was away and rectified the little neglects and transpositions of the housemaid; he did not know how much time, and how many tears were given to his shirts and his socks and collars. He was unaware of the patient consideration devoted to the dinner, to ensure that he should have an appetizing meal after his work in the office during the day. He did not entertain the suspicion that the regularity of the house was only effected by constant urgency and supervision.

That there was a change in the relations of Philip and his wife did not strike the outer world, which had not been invited by him previously to consider the nature and closeness of those relations. In the presence of others Philip was courteous and formal towards his wife now, but he had been courteous and formal towards her in public before. He had not called upon the neighbours and acquaintances to rejoice with him because he had found domestic happiness; he did not invite them now to lament with him because he had discovered it to be chimerical.

He refused to Salome none of those attentions which are required by common politeness; what she missed were those which spring out of real affection. His behaviour to her in public was unchanged, and he carried this manner into his private interviews with her. Such interviews were now brief and business-like. He no longer spoke to her about what was past, he never referred to her father. He never allowed her to entertain the smallest hope that his behaviour would change.

Philip rarely spoke to a servant, never except on

business; and he was surprised one day when the nurse ventured to intrude on his privacy and ask leave to say something to him.

Philip gave the required permission ungraciously.

Then the woman said:

'Please, sir, the missus be that onconsiderate about hersen that she'd never think o' telling nobody about nowt that was wrong with her. And so, I dare say, you don't know, sir, that it is not all well wi' her. Shoo has sudden faintive's, and they come on ow'er often. Shoo makes light o't, but don't better of it. I sed to her, shoo ought to tell you, but shoo wouldn't. And, please sir, shoo's a good missus, and too precious to be let slip through the fingers for not looking after what's amiss i' time. So—sir—I've made bould to say a word aboot it.'

Philip was surprised, even shocked.

'I will see to it,' he said; and then, 'That will do.'

He took occasion to speak with Salome about her health, and now his eyes were opened to see how delicate she had become. She admitted her fainting-fits, but made light of them.

'I have been overtaxed, that is all, Philip. I shall soon be quite myself again.'

'You have had a good deal of anxiety, no doubt, and that may account for it. Still—it would be satisfaction to have an opinion. Do you care for Mr. Knight?'

'Oh no, Philip—he is very clever, but too young. I should not like to have Mr. Knight here about me. But I assure you, it is nothing!—I mean there is nothing really the matter with me. It used to be said that I had all the *physique* of us two sisters, and Janet all the *verve*.'

'I wish you to have proper advice. You understand. I wish it.'

'Then, Philip, I will let anyone you like come and see me, or I will go to anyone you recommend.'

'I have no knowledge of doctors,' he said almost contemptuously.

'If I might have a choice——' she hesitated.

'Of course you may—in reason.'

'There is Mr. John Dale; he was dear Uncle Jeremiah's best friend, and he is Janet's guardian. I always liked him, and he knows about us sisters. Besides, I do want to see him and ask him what he thinks about Janet; but he is a long way off, he is at Bridlington. If you think it would be extravagant sending so far, I would go myself gladly and see him. Indeed, I dare say the journey would do me good.'

'Very well,' said Philip, 'I'll telegraph for Mr. Dale.'

'And then,' added Salome, 'if you do not object, he can overhaul baby and see that the darling is sound as a bell. But—there is no need at all to telegraph. I know quite well what is the matter with me. It is nothing that any doctor can cure.'

'What is it?'

'I have had a good deal to worry me, to make me unhappy. I cannot sleep, I am always thinking. I can see no way out of the trouble. If there were the tiniest thread to which I could lay hold, then I should soon be well—but there is none. It reminds me of what I have read about the belief the North American Indians have concerning their origin. They were, they say, once in a vast black abyss in the centre of the earth, and there were tiny fibres hanging from the roof, and some of them laid hold of these fibres, and crawled up them, and following them came to the surface of earth and saw the sun, but others never touched a depending thread, and they wander on in timeless darkness, without a prospect, and without cognizance of life.'

'Well——'

'And I am like these, only with this pang, that I have been in the light. No—there is no fibre hanging down for me.'

She spoke timidly, and in a tone of half inquiry.

He did not answer.

'Philip, you must believe my word when I say that I never knew till the night before you heard it, that I was not what it had been given out I was.'

'We will not debate that matter again,' said Philip sharply. 'It can lead to nothing.'

'There is, then, no fibre,' she said sadly, and withdrew.

John Dale arrived, bluff, good-natured, boisterous.

'Hallo! what is the matter with you?' was his first salutation; and when he had heard what her ailments of body were—she made light of them to him—he shook his head and said bluntly, 'That's not all—it is mental. Now, then, what is it all about?'

'Mamma was taken suddenly ill and died; it was a dreadful shock to me. Then baby was unwell, and I had to watch him night and day; he would let no one else be with him.'

'But the expression of your face is changed, and neither your mother nor baby has done that. You are in some trouble. A doctor is a confessor. Come, what is up?'

Then she told him—not all, but a good deal. She told him who she was, and how she had discovered her origin—that her father was the man who had started the swindle about Iodinopolis, but that Beaple Yeo was not his real name; he had assumed that in place of his true name, Schofield.

'What—the scoundrel who did for Nicholas Pennycomequick?'

Salome bowed her head.

'I see it all,' said Dale. 'I never met that fellow Schofield, but I knew Nicholas Pennycomequick, and I know how he was ruined. I had no idea that the fellow Yeo, whom I met at Bridlington, was the same. Now, my dear child, I understand more than you have

told me. I shall not give you any medicine, but order you away from Mergatroyd.'

'I cannot—I cannot leave baby.'

'Then take baby with you.'

Salome shook her head.

She also saw that nothing would do her good save an escape from the crushing daily oppression of Philip's coldness and stiff courtesy.

A day or two later she received a letter with a foreign postmark, and she tore it open eagerly, for she recognised her sister's handwriting.

The letter was short. Janet complained of not getting any better; her strength was deserting her. And she added: 'Oh, Salome, come to me, come to me if you can, and at once. He is here.'

There was no explanation as to who was implied, but Salome understood. Her sister was ill, weak, and was pestered by the presence of that man—that horrible man who was their father.

She went to Philip's door and tapped. She was at once admitted.

'Philip,' she said, 'I refused to take Mr. Dale's advice on Tuesday, I will take it now if you will allow me. I have heard from Janet. She is ill.' The tears came into her eyes. 'She is very ill, and entreats me to fly to her without delay.'

She said nothing to him of who she had heard was with her sister.

'I am quite willing that you should go,' he said.

The words were hard. The lack of feeling in them touched her to the quick.

'Very well, Philip,' she said; 'with your consent I will go. Baby must do without me for awhile, unless,' she brightened, 'unless you will allow me to take baby and nurse with me.'

'No,' answered Philip, 'on no account. Go yourself, but I cannot entertain that other proposal.'

She sighed.

'Where is Janet?' he asked.

'At Andermatt—on the St. Gothard. The air is bracing there.'

'Very well. You will want money. You shall have it.'

'And how long may I stay?'

'That entirely remains with yourself. As far as I am concerned, I am indifferent.'

So Salome was to go. She was now filled with a feverish impatience to be off—not that she cared for herself, that the change might do her good—but because the leaving home would be to her agony, and she was desirous to have the pang over.

She felt that she could not endure to live as she had of late, under the same roof with her husband and yet separated from him, loving him with her faithful, sincere heart, and meeting with rebuff only; guiltless, yet regarded as guilty, her self-justification disregarded, her word treated as unworthy of credence. No—she could not endure the daily mortification, and she knew that it would be well for her to leave; but for all that she knew that the leaving home would be to her the acutest torture she could suffer. She must leave her dear child, uncertain when she would see it again. She did not hide from herself that if she left, she left not to return till some change had taken place in Philip's feelings towards her. She could not return to undergo the same freezing process. But she raised no hopes on what she knew of Philip's character. As far as she was acquainted with it—it was unbending. Salome had that simple faith which leads one to take a step that seems plain, without too close a questioning as to ultimate consequences. She had been told by the doctor whom she trusted that she must go away from Mergatroyd, and immediately came the call of her sister. To her mind, this was a divine indication as to the course she must take, and she prepared accordingly to take it.

At the best of times it is not without misgiving and heartache that we leave home, if only for a holiday, and only for a few weeks; we discover fresh beauties in home, new attractions, things that require our presence, and obstruct our departing steps. A certain vague fear always rises up, lest we should never return, at least, that when we return something should be changed that we value, something going wrong that we have left right, some one face be missing that we hold to with infinite love. It is a qualm bred of the knowledge of the uncertainty of all things in this most shifting world, a qualm that always makes itself felt on the eve of departure. With Salome this was more than a qualm; she was going, she knew not to what; she was going, she knew not for how long; and the future drew a gray impenetrable veil before her eyes—she could not tell, should she return, to what that return would be. She did not reckon about her child. She could not, she would not be separated from it—but whether Philip would let the child go to her, or insist on her return to the child, that she did not ask. The future must decide. Whatever she saw to be her duty, that she would do. That was Salome's motive principle. She would do her duty anywhere, at any sacrifice; when she saw what her duty was.

A cab was procured from the nearest town, four miles distant, to take Salome to the station.

Oh the last clasp of her babe! The tearful eyes, the quivering mouth, the beating heart, the inner anguish; and then——as she ran downstairs, with her veil drawn over her face, Philip encountered her on the landing, and offered her—not his cheek, not his heart—but his arm to take her to the cab.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DESOLATE HOUSE.

PHILIP was restless all that day, after Salome had departed. He had remained at home in the morning to see her off, and he did not return to his work at the factory till after lunch.

At the office, he found it impossible to fix his thoughts on the books and letters before him. He was not an imaginative man, but day-dreams forced themselves before him now; between his eyes and his ledger he saw the pale, tearful face of Salome through her veil. He found his thoughts travelling along the line with her. He saw her in a corner of the railway carriage, with her hands on her lap, looking out of the window, not to see anything, but to hide her wet cheeks from her fellow-passengers. He caught himself wondering whether she had taken sandwiches with her and a little bottle of sherry. When he travelled—and he was called from home occasionally—there was always a neat little package in white paper, and a tiny flat flask, pressed on him. Had any of the servants thought of these things for Salome? That she had thought of them for herself was unlikely. When she reached town, what would she do? Would the porters be attentive? Would they take her wraps and little odds and ends, and see her into a cab? And would the flyman be civil, or would he seek to take advantage of a lone lady, especially one who looked ill and unhappy? Would not such an one become a prey to his rapacity, and be subject to rudeness?

What sort of weather would Salome have for crossing the Channel? She was going by Dover and Ostend, Brussels and the Grand Luxembourg, to Strasburg; thence by Basle to Lucerne, and so on by boat and diligence to Andermatt.

How would she manage about change of money? Where effect an exchange? She had never travelled abroad before; how would she contrive about her luggage? What sort of French scholar was she? Who would be her companions on the long night journey from Brussels to Strasburg? What if she had to endure association with vulgar, insolent, objectionable travelling comrades?

Philip became hot, then cold.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said the clerk, coming to his desk. 'Are you aware that you have subscribed that letter twice over, Yours truly, P. Pennycomequick?'

'So I have; I will write it again.'

'And, sir—I beg pardon—you have directed this letter to Messrs. Brook & Co., Cotton Spinners, Andermatt. Is that right?'

'I have made a mistake. I will write the address again.'

At dinner, that evening, Philip was alone. The parlour-maid waited. She stood a little way off, behind his chair, whilst he ate. He was conscious that she watched him at his soup, that she was counting how many spoonfuls went into his mouth, that he was not unobserved when he added salt and pepper. She was down on his plate like a vulture on a dead camel, the moment he had taken his last spoonful. Probably she was finding it as embarrassing standing watching him eat as he found it eating with her watching.

'Mary,' said Philip, 'did Mrs. Pennycomequick have any refreshments with her when she left—sandwiches and sherry?'

'I beg your pardon, sir; I don't know. I will go and ask cook.'

She did know. Philip was sure she did, but made this an excuse to get out of the dining-room and its oppressive restraint to the free air of the kitchen.

Presently she returned.

'Well?' asked Philip.

'Please, sir, no. Cook says she tried to press them on missis, but missis, sir, wouldn't have 'em. She said she'd have no appetite.'

'What is it?' asked Philip, as a dish was offered.

'Curried rabbit, sir.'

'Curried rabbit? No, thank you.'

Philip looked across the table, to the place hitherto occupied by his wife. He had not been gracious, only coldly civil to her of late, but then—now he would have been glad to have had someone opposite him to whom he could have been coldly civil; someone to whom he might have remarked that the weather had been bad, that the barometer was rising, that the political situation was so and so.

Bother that woman!—he meant the parlour-maid. Then aloud, 'What is it? Oh, veal.' He would have some veal. 'Stuffing?' Oh! the stuffing formed that brown wart at the side, did it?

He tried to eat his veal, but felt that the eye of Mary was on the back of his head, that she was looking at the nape of his neck, and the hair there, and the collar-button, and a little dust that lay on the collar of his coat. Philip had a mole on the nape of his neck, and he was convinced that this mole formed an object of the liveliest interest to Mary. She was watching the mole; when he opened his jaw, the mole took a header and went under his collar; when he shut his mouth it rose above the collar; whilst he was chewing, the mole danced on the horizon of his collar, to Mary's infinite amusement.

Philip turned round. His imagination made him fancy that Mary was tittering, overcome by the antics played by his mole.

Philip took wine, and as he felt the glow of the sherry pass down his throat, he wondered whether Mary felt a glow of sympathy down her throat, occasioned by seeing him drink the sherry.

Her presence was unbearable, and yet—if he dismissed her—how was he to be served?

'I'll ask someone to dine with me to-morrow night,' he said to himself. Then he turned to Mary as she removed his plate, and said, 'How is baby this afternoon? Does he fret much at his mother's being away?'

'I beg your pardon, sir; I don't know. I'll run and ask nurse.'

Of course she knew, but she made this an excuse for getting out of the dining-room into the freer air of the nursery.

Never, in all his life, had Philip found himself more impatient of the silence imposed on him, more desirous to hear his own voice. In his lodgings he had eaten his meals alone—a chop and some potatoes—and he had had a book or a paper at his side whilst eating; the landlady or the slavey had not stood in the room watching him, observing the parting in his hair behind his head, making fun of his mole, impatient to dust his collar. In his lodgings he had drunk beer or London cooper—now he drank claret, sherry, port; but he would have drunk even water, if he might have been alone.

'No, thank you; no dessert!' He jumped up—he was eager to leave the room.

'Please, sir, any cheese?'

'No, thank you, no cheese.'

He ran away from his half-finished dinner to his own study, where he could be alone, away from the insufferable Mary. Then he rang the bell.

'You may bring me up the claret and port here—and the preserved ginger,' he ordered. Then thought he had acted absurdly, and would have countermanded the order had he not been ashamed to confess how unhinged he was.

He sat in his own room, with his claret glass in his hand, dreaming, looking into the fire.

'Where was Salome now? Was she thinking of home—of her baby—of—of—him?'

Then he wondered whether she were cold, and hungry, and tired. She had not slept the previous night. She had been busy packing, or going in and out of baby's room, to kiss the little sleeping face, or to pray by the crib, or let the dew of her tears fall over it.

Philip stood up. He left his glass unfinished, and went upstairs to the nursery. He found the door ajar, and the room empty. The nurse had gone down for a talk in the kitchen—no doubt about Master, and Mary was telling her about his mole, and the spots of dust on his collar.

He entered the nursery and stood by the crib, and looked at the sleeping child.

Little Philip was now quite well again, and was very sound asleep. He was undoubtedly a Pennycomequick. He had dark hair, and long dark eyelashes. But surely—surely there was some trace of his mother in the tiny face. It could not be that he did not bear in him something of her. Philip looked intently at the child, and tried to find out in him some feature of his wife.

There, on this side of the crib, had Salome's hands rested that night when little Philip was ill. Philip, the father, knew the exact spot where her hands had rested, and where her forehead had leaned, with the red-gold hair falling down over the side upon the bedding. Where the white left hand had clutched, with the gold ring sparkling on it, there now Philip placed his hand, and there streamed up to him from the crib of his child a magnetic influence that put him *en rapport* with his absent wife, brought to him a soothing sense of oneness with her who was far away, and filled his heart with regret and yearning.

The child began to cry.

Then Philip rang the bell, and when the nurse arrived, red and blowing——

'How is it that you are not at your post?' he asked.

'Please, sir, I only just ran down to warm up Dr. Ridge's Food for the baby,' was the answer.

Philip descended to the study, and resumed his claret glass. At the same time he began to consider his own conduct towards Salome, and, now only, saw that it did not bear the same complexion as he had hitherto attributed to it. In vain did he call up before his mind the dishonour of relationship with such a man as Beaple Yeo, a rogue after whom the police had been in quest more than once. In vain did he poke the fires of his wrath at the trickery of his marriage, he could not convince himself that Salome had been privy to it; and if not privy to it, what right had he to treat her with the severity he had exercised? But not even then did it occur to him that the main element of his wrath was supplied by his own wounded pride.

The discovery of her parentage must have been to Salome a crushing humiliation. What justification was there for his adding to her burden by his reproaches and coldness? She could not undo the past, unmake her relationship. His anger, his resentment, could not improve the situation, could not shake the truth of the hateful fact that he was allied to so great a scoundrel. Though she had been married under a wrong name, that would not invalidate the marriage even if he wished it—even if he wished it! Did he wish it?

He thought about Uncle Jeremiah's will, and how that by it Salome had been left almost sole legatee; how that the mill and everything had been given to her, and how that in a mysterious manner that will had been cancelled. The old haunting suspicion that his aunt had meddled with and defaced the will returned. He thought of her behaviour when he allowed her to see that he entertained a suspicion; of her evasion of her promise; of her laxity of principle;

and he could not shake off the thought that it was quite possible that through her Salome had been defrauded of her rights.

If so, had he any right to complain if he had been deceived? How did Mrs. Sidebottom show beside Salome? And he—he, Philip—had he shown in generous colours either?

It was said of that distinguished epicure the Marquis de Cussy, 'L'estomac de M. n'a jamais bronché,' and the same may be said of most consciences—but not of all. As we have seen even Mrs. Sidebottom's conscience once felt a twinge at the time when consciences generally do feel twinges, when too late to redress wrong actions. So now did Philip, as he sat over the fire with his claret glass in his hand, become aware that he had acted with undue severity, and he spilt the claret on the floor.

Next day, Philip went to the old bedroom which he and his wife had occupied till he changed his quarters. He found the housemaid there, who seemed startled at seeing him enter.

'Please, sir, I'm drawing down the blinds, because of the sun.'

'I will trouble you to leave the blinds up,' said Philip. 'I do not choose to have the house—the room—look as though someone in it were dead. Here—by the way, my room downstairs will need a thorough turn out. I will return to this room; at all events for a time.'

'Very well, sir.'

She left the chamber. He stood in it and looked about him. Salome had left everything tidy. Some of her drawers were open, not many were locked. Most of her little private treasures had been removed.

Where was the photograph on a stand of Uncle Jeremiah? It had no doubt been taken away by her. Where the three little owls sitting on a pen-wiper? It was gone—and the Christmas cards that had stood

on the chimney-piece, and the ugly glazed yellow flower vase, given her, on her birthday, by the cook.

The clock on the chimney-piece was stopped. Salome had wound that up regularly; her hand was no longer there, and it had been allowed to run down. The room was dead without the tick of the clock. Philip wound it up and set the pendulum swinging. It ticked again, but in a formal, weary manner, unlike the brisk and cheerful tick of old.

The room had a cold unfurnished look without Salome's knickknacks — trifles in themselves, but giving an air of refinement and cheeriness to the apartment. He went over to the dressing-table. No combs and brushes, no hairpins, bottles of hair oil and wash there—simply a table with a looking-glass on it. One little glass was there, but no flowers in it; and hitherto it had never failed to contain some—even in winter. With what ingenuity had Salome kept that little glass on the dressing-table bright—in winter at times with holly only, or ivy leaves—or moss and a scarlet Jew's ear!

It was the same downstairs. There the flowers were ragged and faded in the vases. Salome was away, who had rearranged them every second day.

The room smelt musty, and Philip threw up the window. He stood at it, and looked out dreamily. Where was Salome now? Was she in Switzerland? Had she any heart to look at the mountains? Would the wonderful scenery be any joy to her—alone?

'I can never dine as I did yesterday,' said Philip. 'I will ask Tomkins in.'

That day he did invite Tomkins, his head traveller. But he was irritated with Tomkins and angry with the maid, because Tomkins' seat had been put at the end of the table, in Salome's place; and Tomkins was a different object for his eyes to rest on from Salome. The dinner passed wearily. Philip was not, indeed, concerned about the parlour-maid examining the mole

on his neck, but he had to make conversation for Tomkins, and to listen to Tomkins' commercial room tales, and to be civil to Tomkins.

After dinner Tomkins was in no hurry to go—he enjoyed the Pennycomequick port, and on the port grew confidential, and Philip became tired, every minute more tired, of Tomkins, and was vexed with himself for having asked Tomkins in, and vowed he would dine by himself next evening. Then Tomkins, finding it difficult to rouse Philip's interest and excite a laugh, began to tell rather broad stories, and was undeterred by Philip's stony stare, till Philip suddenly stood up, rang for coffee, and said it was time to adjourn to another room, and so cut Tomkins short.

But even after Tomkins had been got into the drawing-room, and had been chilled there by its size and coldness, and the inattention of his host, he showed little inclination to depart, and threw out hints that he could strum an accompaniment to himself on the 'pi-anny,' and sing a song, sentimental or humorous, if Mr. Pennycomequick would like to hear him. But Philip pleaded headache, and became at length so freezing as to force Tomkins to take his leave.

Philip did not feel it necessary to accompany his head commercial into the hall; but Mary was there to assist him into his great-coat, and find him his hat, and give him a light for his cigar.

'Well, Mary,' said Tomkins pleasantly. 'Thank you, Mary; to take a light from you warms the heart, Mary. I'm as blind as a beetle in the dark, and 'pon my word, dear, I don't know my right hand from my left in the dark. You wouldn't object, would you—there's a dear—just to set me on my way home, with my nose in the right direction, and then my cigar-light will carry me on? Can't go wrong if I follow that. But it is the first step, Mary—the first step is the thing. *Le premier pas*, say the French.'

Then he hooked his arm into hers, and the demure Mary had no objection to take just half a dozen steps along the road with the affable Mr. Tomkins—who was a widower—and to leave the hall door ajar as she escorted him part of his way home.

Philip sat in the drawing-room in bad humour. It was dull dining by himself: it was insufferable dining with Tomkins. He could not invite brother manufacturers to dine with him every evening. What must he do? He would return to plain food and a book at his solitary meal, and dismiss the critical parlour-maid till he required his plate to be changed.

Philip rang the bell. The teacups were left on the table. His bell remained unanswered. He rang again. It was still unnoticed. Then he angrily went down into the hall, and found the door ajar. He called to the servants in the kitchen for Mary. The housemaid appeared. 'Please, sir, she's gone out a moment to post a letter.'

'What! at this time of night?'

'It was most particular; her mother be dreadful porely, sir, and Mary do take on about her orful!'

'Go to bed—lock up,' ordered Philip; and he stood in the hall whilst the frightened domestics filed past.

Then he turned down the gas and returned to the drawing-room. He would hear Mary when she came in by the hall door, and would at once give her her dismissal.

He sat waiting. Here was fresh trouble come on him through his wife's absence. He would have to see that his servants were kept in proper order; that they kept proper hours.

He had hardly resumed his seat before he heard steps in the hall, and then on the stairs. Certainly not the tread of Mary; not light, and not stealthy, but firm and ponderous.

What step could it be? Tomkins returning to tell

one of his good stories, or to ask for soda-water? He listened, and hesitated whether to rise or not. It must be the step of Tomkins; no one else would venture to come in at this time. The step was arrested at the drawing-room door; then Philip stood up, and as he did so the door was thrown open, and Uncle Jeremiah stood on the threshold, looking at him. He knew the old man at once, though he was changed, and his hair white.

'Philip,' said Jeremiah, 'where is your wife? Where is Salome?'

Philip was too much astonished to answer.

Then said Jeremiah sternly: 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

OFF.

WHEN I was a boy I possessed a pet owl. It was a source of amusement to me to feed that owl with mice. When the trap had caught one of these night disturbers, I took it to the solemn owl, who sat blinking in the daylight, half awake and half asleep. The owl at once gulped down the mouse, and then went fast asleep with the mouse in her inside, but with the end of the tail protruding from her beak. About an hour later I went to the owl, took hold of the end of the mouse's tail and pulled it, whereupon up the throat of the owl came the mouse, backwards, and the bird of wisdom was roused to wild wonder and profound puzzlement to account for the sudden disgorging of her meal. Mrs. Sidebottom had bolted Uncle Jeremiah, and was doing her best to digest him and his fortune, when, unexpectedly, her meal came to life again, and she sat gulping, blinking, bemused in her sitting-room, waiting for the return of Lambert from the billiard-table, to communicate to him the

news that had reached her. Anyone who had seen my owl would perceive at once that the case of Mrs. Sidebottom was analogous.

The consternation could hardly have been greater on Quilp reappearing when a posse of wives was sitting discussing him, esteemed dead; and yet Jeremiah was no Quilp. But it is not Quilps alone who would produce dismay were they to return to life. Imagine the emotions produced in a hospital which has received a bequest of ten thousand pounds, and has spent fifteen guineas on the portrait of the benefactor, should the benefactor descend from the frame, declare himself alive, and require the return of his thousands. Think of the junior partner, who has been waiting till a senior shuffled off his mortal coil to make room for him; how would he feel were the dead to return to life? Think of the curate waiting for the living, the next presentation to which is for him, should the old rector, after having laid himself down in his grave, change his mind and get out and resume his benefice for another fifteen years!

Mrs. Sidebottom had but just received news of the reappearance of Uncle Jeremiah, and, like an energetic woman, she wasted as little time as might be in exclamations of dismay. She was not the woman to hover in uncertainty, and ask advice how to get out of a difficulty. Like one who has trodden in mire, she pulled her foot out instantaneously to set it on dry and firm ground.

'I don't know how the law stands, and whether the sentence of the Court of Probate can be reversed,' she said; 'but of one thing I am very sure—that he who has can hold, and tire out those who try to open his hands, if he has any wit.'

Then in came Lambert.

'Oh, Lamb!' exclaimed his mother, 'here is a pretty predicament we are in! My brother Jeremiah has come to life again!'

The captain burst out laughing.

'This is no laughing matter,' said his mother testily. 'How can you be such a hyæna? Jeremiah has reappeared at Mergatroyd, and there is—well, I can't mince matters—the devil to pay. I presume he will want to reclaim what we have distributed between us. The mill, of course, with the business, he will take back under his control, and cut off the supply thence. That is a serious matter—and then there is the money he left——'

'Which I suppose he will require you to return?'

'Which I can't and won't return. Bless me, Lamb, what a state of things! Our income reduced from half the profits of the business to one-sixth, which he cannot touch, as that comes to me under my marriage settlement. We must leave England—we must leave at once. I shall know nothing about Jeremiah's return. I shall keep away till I see in what humour he is, what he intends to do, and in what light he regards me. There are trifles connected with the administration I don't care to meet him about. As for his savings, his securities, and so on, I will return nothing'—she stamped her foot—'no, Lamb; for, in fact, I can't!'

'How do you know that he is back, and that this is not a false alarm?'

'Look here——' She tossed a letter to him. 'It is laconic. He wrote it with a sneer—I know he did. Jeremiah never liked me. He has disappeared, and has come to life again, out of spite.'

Captain Pennycomequick—to be correct, Penycombe-Quick—took the letter and read it with a smile.

It was short.

'DEAR LOUISA,

'I am back, hearty again. I have been to Algiers for my health. I had rheumatic fever, and

when I came round I found you had already pronounced me dead, and had divided the spoils—concerning which, a word later.

'Your affectionate brother,

'JEREMIAH P.'

'Is it his handwriting?' asked Lambert.

'Of course it is. Here is a pretty mess for me to be in. I shall have everyone laughing at me, because I swore that the man in the shirt and great-coat was Jeremiah.' "Concerning which—the spoils—a word later." What does he mean by that, but that he proposes calling me to account for every penny? I will not remain in England. I cannot. I will not receive this letter.'

'But you have received it.'

'I shall make my landlady return it, with a note to say that she took the liberty to open it, so as to be able to write to the sender, and say that I have gone abroad for my health. Where shall I say I have gone to?—To Algiers, whence Jeremiah has just returned.'

'You cannot do that.'

'But I will. Self-preservation is the first law. As for the money—I lost some by that Beaple Yeo; not much, but some. I was so prompt, and had such presence of mind, that I caught the man and made him refund before he had got rid of most of it. I have money in securities—railway debentures and foreign loans. I have all the papers by me—I trust no one but myself, since my faith has been shaken by Smithies. Lamb, we must be off directly. It would be too much a shock to my nerves to see my brother that was dead and is alive again. What are you laughing at, Lamb? You really are silly.'

'There is some prospect now of my coming to that hundred and fifty, I hope,' said the captain. 'Uncle Jeremiah may now write another will.'

'How selfish you are! You think only of yourself,

not how I am afflicted. But, Lamb, I have had you sponging on me all these years, and keeping me in an exhausted financial condition that is intolerable.'

'We shall revert to our former condition, I suppose, now,' said Lambert unconcernedly.

'That is precisely what I cannot do. Return to poverty and middle-class society, the very crown and climax of which is a Lord and Lady Mayoress—when we are on the eve of making the acquaintance of county people! What have you done for yourself? You have been too inert to seize the chances I have put in your way. You must marry money. Jane Mulberry was worth five hundred per annum, and you let her slip through your fingers.'

'She had a moustache.'

'She had money. Five hundred pounds would gild it. Then there was Miss Smithson.'

'She was insipid.'

'What of that? The insipid women make the best wives, they are so non-resistant. In marriage, men should be teetotalers and take weak and washy women. They are far the best to get on with.'

'Don't think I've much fancy for such,' said the captain languidly.

'I tremble to think,' said his mother angrily, 'what the offspring of a weak woman and such an unenergetic man would be!'

'Then why recommend such a marriage?'

'Because we must consider ourselves, not the unborn possibilities. However, to return to the subject that now most occupies me. My condition is desperate. You must marry. I can support you no longer.'

'And so you deport me to Algiers?'

'My dear boy, we are not going to Algiers.'

'Then where to?'

'To Andermatt.'

'Andermatt!—Where is that?'

'On the St. Gothard.'

'And pray why to Andermatt on the St. Gothard?'

'Because Mrs. Baynes is there.'

'Oh, by all means.'

'What makes you say "by all means"?' asked his mother sharply.

'She's a jolly girl, good-looking, and no nonsense about her.'

'Do you think that I would take you to her if that were all? You know she is a widow. She has her hundred and fifty from what was sunk by Jeremiah when she married, but that is not all: she has been left well provided for by her husband, Mr. Albert Baynes. I know all about it. I got everything out of Salome. I told her how anxious I was about her sister, how pained I was concerning her bereavement, and how I hoped that she was not left in bad circumstances. Salome very openly told me that she was very comfortably provided for, and no stipulation made about marrying again. I know what Salome meant when she let me draw that out of her—she meant that you should know; but I then had my eye on Miss Smithson. However, now that we must go abroad we may as well kill two birds with one stone. Besides, as Jeremiah took such a lively interest in Janet, he may be gratified at your marrying her, and not press me with demands which I could not comply with—which I will not, no, I will not comply with.'

'But she is in bad health.'

'Oh, nothing but sentiment at her husband's death; besides, if she is delicate, all the better.'

'I don't see that,' said the captain, feebly disgusted at his mother's heartlessness.

'Fiddle-faddle,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'it is all part of the business—it goes with widows' caps. When I lost Sidebottom I was worn to a shadow and got a cough; but I began to recover flesh when I went into half mourning, and lost my cough with my

weeds. When you appear on the scene it will be codliver oil to her.'

'It will be very dull at this place you speak of.'

'Of course it will be dull and hateful, but what will you have? I sacrifice myself for you. You must get off my hands and shift for yourself; I have had you as a charge too long. I want to see you well provided for, and as the Smithson and Jane Mulberry failed, you must take the Baynes. I can't tell you exactly what she is worth, but I will ascertain from Salome, who is there, before you commit yourself. Remember, Lamb, we must go. I cannot stay here and face Jeremiah.'

'Why not? It would be the most honourable thing to do, and might answer the best in the end.'

'I cannot do it. Why—how would you feel—how could you feel towards a person who had pronounced you dead, and proceeded to administer? Much as a man might towards the surgeon who proceeded to dissect him before he was dead. No, Lamb, I will not remain. I can always write to Jeremiah, and express my profound astonishment to hear of his return, and assume an air of injury that I should have been left in the dark so long. Indeed, I think that will be the card to play—throw the blame on him, and if the case comes into court, I can lay stress on this. Wilfully he allowed me to remain in ignorance of his existence. Something had to be done. The factory would not go on of itself. The factory could not be carried on without money. The business would go to pieces unless energetically prosecuted. Jeremiah may feel grateful, and ought to feel grateful to me, that I acted with such readiness in the matter and saved the firm of Pennycomequick from ruin. I can bring in a heavy bill against him for my services. However, I had rather do this from a distance, and by letter. I will take the injured tone, and make him dance to that tune.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was a woman of resource. She never suffered herself to be discouraged by adversity; and adversity now faced her wearing the mask of her brother returned to life. She had much energy of character and fertility of invention, which, if she had been a woman of principle, instead of unscrupulous self-seeking, might have made her a valuable person in society. She was at present frightened—she had invested some of the money she had drawn to herself from Jeremiah's savings in a manner that promised well; some she had lost. She neither desired to be called to account for what she had squandered, nor to be forced to reimburse those happy speculations which were likely to place her in easy circumstances. Until she had had good professional advice, and until she knew what her brother intended, she considered that safety lay in absence.

She went about in York, leaving her card; and when she saw a friend, she told her that she was off to the Continent for a bit of a change. She had not been very well, and the doctors had insisted on variation of scene and air, and she felt herself that life was too short to spend it in one place. The world was large and must be seen, and those dear snowy mountains—they possessed for her a fascination she had struggled against, but had been unable further to resist.

'My dear Mrs. Jacques, you know what anxiety and care I had last year about my poor brother's affairs—winding up, you know. I held up through it all, animated by a sense of duty, but it told on me in the end, and now I am going to relax. I shall spend the summer in the Alps, and unless I am much better I shall go to Algiers for the winter. Have you any friends who will be there next Christmas? Oh, my dear! to think of Christmas in Algiers; a hot sun and no plum-pudding!'

Mrs. Sidebottom had not the faintest desire to

spend a winter in Algiers; she thought Mentone, or Florence, or Pau would suit her better, according to where she could get into the best society, and she resolved to leave the determination to the future; if she found during the summer people whom it was worth her while hanging on to, and who were wintering anywhere abroad, she would attach herself to them. But with that curious crookedness which prevails in some natures, she went about asking questions about hotels and *pensions* at Algiers, keeping her ears open at the same time to hear of persons of position who were likely to winter elsewhere. It was possible that, if she made it well known that she would winter in Algiers, acquaintances would tell her of friends of theirs who were wintering elsewhere. Nor was she wrong.

'Oh, I am so sorry you are not going to Mentone; Sir William Pickering is going there because of the health of dear Lady Pickering. Such charming people —you would have liked to know them—but as you are going to Algiers, of course I cannot get you acquainted with each other.' Mrs. Sidebottom knew well enough that if she had said she was going to Mentone this piece of information would not have been vouchsafed her. 'Oh! Mrs. Sidebottom—you are visiting Algiers. There is a nice young lady, a niece, going there. She is in a decline. I shall be eternally obliged to you if you would show her kindness; she is badly off, and it would be goodness itself if you would just look in now and then and ascertain that she is comfortable and not imposed on.'

'My dear Mrs. Tomson, you could not have asked me to do anything that would have pleased me more —but unfortunately it is not certain I am going to Algiers. If I make up my mind to go I will write to you for the address of your niece, and you may rely on me, I will do my utmost for her.' This was accompanied by an internal mem.: Have nothing

further to do with Mrs. Tomson. I'm not going abroad to be anybody's nurse. Heaven forbid!

'Oh, Mrs. Sidebottom! So you are off to Switzerland and Algiers. Now there could be nothing more opportune. We are going to have a bazaar to raise money for the relief of the peasants in France, who have suffered from the war. Would you mind sending as your contribution a box of charming Swiss carvings and delightful Algerian and Moorish pottery—the latter will sell rapidly and at high prices—you are so good and charitable, I know you will.'

'I will certainly do so. Rely on me. I intended to have had a stall; I will send two cases instead'—with a mental mem.: Forget all about the bazaar till it is over, and then write a proper apology.

'Oh, Mrs. Sidebottom! I've lost my maid again. As you are going to Switzerland, will you do me the favour of looking out for a really serviceable girl—you know my requirements—and arrange all about trains and so on, so that she may reach me safely? Perhaps you would not mind advancing her journey-money, and I will repay it—if she suits, of which I have no doubt. I am determined to have no more English servants.'

Mrs. Sidebottom found that her acquaintances were eager to make use of her, but then she had sufficient knowledge of the world to expect that.

'Have you secured through tickets, Lamb?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Then we are off to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DEPOSED.

GONE as a dream!—that brief period of hope and happiness and comfort. Philip had a disquieting prospect opening before him, as disquieting as that

which drove Mrs. Sidebottom from England, but different in kind. Philip was ready enough to account for every penny, and return all the money undiminished which had come to his share. What troubled him was the fearful look-out of a return to furnished lodgings. He saw himself about to be cast forth from the elegancies, the conveniences of life, and cast down to its vulgarities and discomforts. He saw himself about to be transferred from the cushioned carriage on the smooth road, to a buggy on a corderoy way, all jolts and kicks and plunges and breakdowns. He was about to descend from succulent joints and savoury *entremets* to mutton-chops alternating into beef-steaks, from claret to bitter beer, from a place of authority to one of submission, from progress to stagnation, from a house of his own over which to range at pleasure to confinement within two rooms, one opening out of the other. He must go back to streaky forks, and spoons that at dinner recall the egg of breakfast, to knives with adhesive handles and tumblers frosted with finger-marks, to mirror frames encased in fly-proof snipped green paper and beaded flower-mats, a horsehair sofa, a cruet-stand with old crusted mustard and venerable Worcester sauce in it, to wax fruit under a glass shade, as covered with dust as a Peruvian island with guano, to folding-doors into the adjacent bedroom, and to curtains tied back with discarded bonnet-ribbons. But it would have been bad enough for Philip, now accustomed to better things, to have had the prospect before him of descending alone; but he was no longer alone, he had a wife, who, however, was absent, and about whose return he was uncertain. And he had with him the encumbrance of a baby; and the encumbrance of a baby drew with it a train of dissatisfied and departing nurses, one after another, like the procession of kings revealed to Macbeth in Hecate's cave.

A babe in a lodging-house is as out of place as was the ancestral Stanley found in an eagle's nest on the top of a pine, of which the family crest preserves a reminiscence.

Uncle Jeremiah was restored to strength, moral as well as physical. He no longer thought of his heart, he allowed it to manage its pulsations unconsidered. He was heartily glad that he had been saved committing an act of egregious folly, and he was prepared now to meet Salome without a twinge. Common-sense had resumed the place of upper hand, and the temporary disturbance was over for ever. To every man comes at some period after he has begun to decline a great horror of old age, an agonizing clutch at the pleasures and follies of youth, a time of intoxication when he is not responsible for his acts, an intoxication produced by fear lest life with its roses should have passed and left only thorns behind and decay. Men whose lives have been spent in business, subjected to routine, who have not thought of love and amusement, of laughter and idleness, are suddenly roused to find themselves old and standing out of the rush of merriment and the sunshine of happiness. Then they make a frantic effort to seize what hitherto they have despised, to hug to their hearts what they have formerly cast away. It is the St. Luke's summer, a faint reflex of the departed glory and warmth, a last smile before the arrival of the winter gales. No moment in life is so fraught with danger as this—at none is there more risk of shipwreck to reputation.

Now that Jeremiah had passed through this period, he could survey its risks with a smile and a sense of self-pity and a little self-contempt. He who had always esteemed himself strong had discovered that he could be weak, and, perhaps, this lesson had made him more lenient with the infirmities of others.

He returned to his friend John Dale, looking older by some years, but also more hale. He had touched

the earth but had risen from it stronger than when he fell.

On reaching Bridlington, he learned from Dale the state of matters at Mergatroyd. Whilst there, a hasty note arrived for Mr. Dale from Salome to say that she was leaving, with her husband's consent, to be with her sister in Switzerland, and both thought they could read between the lines that there had been a fresh difference with Philip.

Thereupon Jeremiah went to Mergatroyd, and came in unexpectedly and unannounced on Philip.

Jeremiah Pennycomequick had not decided what course to pursue with regard to his sister and nephew. He was conscious that he had played them a trick, that he had put them to a test which he was not justified in applying to them.

He was angry with both—with his half-sister for the precipitation with which she had accepted and certified his death, and with Philip for his treatment of Salome. He did not disguise from himself that his interference in such a delicate matter as a quarrel, or an estrangement, between husband and wife, might make the breach worse.

When he arrived at Mergatroyd, he had not resolved what course to take. He sat up half the night with Philip.

'You will find,' said the latter with some pride, 'that I have maintained the business in a healthy condition; it is not in the condition it was during the Continental war which affected linen as well as other things, but that was of its nature ephemeral. It rests on a sound basis. Go through the books and satisfy yourself. My aunt,' there was a tone of bitterness when he added this—'my aunt watched the conduct of the factory with a jealous eye, and did not trust my accounts without a scrutiny. As for what was in the bank, I can give an account of every penny, and the securities, such as came to me, are untouched.'

'I will look into these matters at my leisure,' said Jeremiah, 'and if I find that matters are as you say, I will let you down lightly; only, I forewarn you, let down you will be. And now a word about Salome.'

'My wife,' said Philip shortly.

'Your wife—exactly—but——'

'With regard to my wife, I brook no interference,' said Philip haughtily. 'The mill is your affair, my domestic relations are my own.'

'You cry out before you are hurt,' retorted Jeremiah; 'I am not about to interfere. I know that you are greatly disconcerted at the discovery as to the parentage of your wife.'

Philip held up his head stiffly and closed his lips tightly. He said nothing.

'I am not intermeddling,' continued Jeremiah, 'but I wish you to understand this: that I have some claim to speak a word for Salome, whom I have always—that is to say—whom I have looked upon with fatherly regard. The two little girls grew up in my house, not a day passed but I saw them; I rode them as infants at my knee, I bought them toys. They ran to meet me—cupboard love, of course—when I came from the mill, because I had oranges or sweet things in my pocket. I took pride in them as they became blooming girls, I saw that they were well taught. After dinner they soothed me with their music, and when I was dull enlivened me with their prattle. Have I, then, no right to speak a word for one or the other? I have been to them more than a father. Their father deserted them as soon as they were born, but I have nurtured and clothed them, and seen to the development of their minds and the disciplining of their characters. It is absurd of you to deny me the right to speak. To interfere is not my purpose.'

'Very well, I will listen.'

'Then let me tell you this—I know who their father

was. When Mrs. Cusworth came into this house she very honestly told me the truth about them, and by my advice she kept her counsel. It could do them only harm—cloud their joys—to know that they had a disreputable father. We knew nothing of the man's subsequent history. He had disappeared, and might be—as we hoped—dead. But, even if alive, we did not suppose he would care to come in quest of his twin daughters, and we trusted, should he do this, that he would not find them. We hoped that he might not conjecture that the children had been adopted by their aunt, and that she had moved into Yorkshire to Mergatroyd. Neither Salome nor Janet knew who their father was, or rather both supposed him to be that worthy man who perished so lamentably in my service. By what means he made the discovery and got on their track I do not know, and I hardly care to know. If I could take into my house the children of such a man, it hardly becomes you——'

Philip interrupted his uncle.

'That fellow Schofield never injured you as he did my father. He not only ruined him, but he also was the cause of his estrangement from you, or rather, yours from him.'

'Bear the man what grudge you will,' said Jeremiah hastily, 'but do not visit his offences on the head of his unoffending child.'

Philip stood up. He was angry, but not to be moved from his stiffness of manner.

'I think,' said he, 'you will be tired. I am, and probably bed is the best place for both. As this is now your house, and I am an intruder in it, I must ask permission to occupy my room for to-night.'

Jeremiah laughed. 'And you—a lawyer! Why, you are in legal possession, and till there is a reversal of the sentence of the Probate Court, I have no more rights than a ghost. No—I am your guest.'

Philip retired to his room. The words of Jeremiah, charging him with visiting the offences of the father on the unoffending child, were but the repetition of his own self-reproach, but for that very reason less endurable. It is the truth of a charge which gives it its sting. A man will endure to say to himself what he will not tolerate to be said to him by another.

He went to his room, but not to bed. He sat at the window, where Salome had sat, in the same chair, thinking with dark brow and set lips. In one thing, his self-esteem was encouraged. His uncle would see and be forced to acknowledge how thoroughly he had mastered the technicalities of the business, and with what order and prudence he had carried it on. He need not shrink from the closest examination into his conduct of the factory. Everything was in order, the books well kept, several contracts in hand. His uncle might dismiss him, but he could not say a word against his integrity and business habits. He had taken to himself nothing but what Mrs. Sidebottom, as administratrix, had passed over to him. And as to his uncle's disappearance, he had done nothing as to the identification of the wrong body; he had held himself neutral, as incapable of forming an opinion from inadequate acquaintance with his uncle. If blame was to be cast, it must fall heavily on Mrs. Sidebottom, but none would rest on him.

But—how about the future? Philip now recalled the discomfiture, the monotonies, the irritations of lodging-house life. Could he go back to that? If his uncle offered to retain him in his house, could he consent? His pride counselled him to go, his love of comfort to remain.

Uncle Jeremiah had not invited him to remain, but Philip thought it likely that he might. His pride was galled in many ways. It would be most painful to him to continue at the factory, in which he had been a master, henceforth in a subordinate position. Should

he return to the solicitor's firm at Nottingham, in which he had been before? That his services there were valued he was well aware, that his resignation of a clerkship therein had caused annoyance he was well aware; he knew, however, that his place was filled, and that if he returned to the office, he would be obliged to take a lower desk. He might, and probably would be, advanced, but that would require patience, and he must wait till a vacancy occurred. Besides, it would be a humiliation to have to solicit readmission, after he had left the office on stilts, as one who had come into a fortune.

Then—what was to be done about his wife? He could not maintain her and her child on a junior clerk's wage. Moreover, he had sent her away when he occupied a lofty moral platform, because connection with her sullied the fair name of Pennycomequick, and might injure the firm; and now that he no longer belonged to the firm, but was a poor clerk of no consequence in the world, was he to write to her a letter of humble apology, and ask her to return and share the beggary of a clerk's life in furnished lodgings with him, to unite with him in the long doleful battle against landladies? He had little doubt that Uncle Jeremiah would propose to make Salome an allowance, and that on this allowance together with his salary they might be able to rub along. But to accept such relief from Uncle Jeremiah, granted through his wife—his wife whom he had snubbed and thrust away—was not pleasant to contemplate.

Whatever way Philip considered the meal set before him, he saw only humble-pie, and humble-pie is the least appetizing of dishes. Philip approached it as a sulky child does a morsel which his nurse requires him to eat, without consuming which he must expect no pudding. He walked round it; he looked at it from near, then he drew back and considered it at long range, then he touched it, then smelt it, then

turned his back on it, then—with a grumble—began to pick a few crumbs off it and put them between his lips.

He went to bed at last, unresolved, angry with himself, angry with Salome, angry with his uncle, and angry with the baby who was sobbing in the nursery.

Philip's experiences had all been made in spiral form; they were ever turning about himself, and though each revolution attained a higher level, it was still made about the same centre. There is a family likeness in minds as well as in noses and eyes and hair; and in this Philip resembled his aunt, but with the difference that he was governed by a strong sense of rectitude, and that nothing would induce him to deviate from what he believed to be just, whereas his aunt's principles were flexible, and governed only by her own interests.

In these days in which we live, socialism is in the air, that is to say, it is talked of and professed, but whether by any is practised I am inclined to question. For socialism I take to mean everyone for everyone else, and no one for himself, and this is a condition contrary to the nature of man, for men are all more or less waterspouts, vortices, attracting to themselves whatever comes within their reach, and to be actuated by a centrifugal, not a centripetal force is the negative of individuality.

We stalk our way over the ocean, drawing up through our skirts every drop of water, every sea-weed, and crab and fish and mollusc that we can touch, and whirl them round and round ourselves, and only cast them away and distribute them to others when they are of no more use to ourselves.

Every climatic zone through which Philip had passed had served to feed and build up the column of his self-esteem; the rugged weather in furnished lodgings, and the still seas into which he had entered

by his uncle's death, and by his marriage. Nothing had broken it down, dissolved its continuity, dissipated its force.

At sea, when a vessel encounters a waterspout, it discharges ordnance, and the vibration of the atmosphere caused by the explosion snaps the column and it goes to pieces. But would the shock caused by the return of Uncle Jeremiah, and the loss of position and wealth that this entailed, suffice to break the pillar of self-esteem that constituted Philip Pennycomequick? Hardly; for though touched in many ways, he could hold up his head conscious of his rectitude; he had managed the mill admirably, kept the accounts accurately, adapted himself to the new requirements perfectly. He could, when called upon, give up his place, but he would march forth with all the honours of war.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ON THE LAKE.

MRS. SIDEBOTTOM had reached Lucerne very rumpled and dirty and out of temper, having travelled all night from Brussels, and having had to turn out and have her boxes examined at Thionville and Basle. She had scrambled through a wretched breakfast off cold coffee and a roll at Strasburg, at four o'clock in the morning, and then had been condemned to crawl along by a slow train from Strasburg to Basle, and by another, still slower, from Basle to Lucerne. A night in a comfortable hotel had restored her wonderfully; and when she took her place under the awning in the lake steamer, with a ticket in her glove for Fluelen, which she insisted on calling Flew-ellen, she was in a contented mood, and inclined to patronize the scenery.

The day was lovely, the water blue, Pilatus without

his cap, and the distant Oberland peaks seen above the Brunig Pass were silver against a turquoise sky.

'This,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, dipping into 'Murray's Handbook' to ascertain what it was proper to say—'this is distinguished above every lake in Switzerland, and perhaps in Europe, by the beauty and sublime grandeur of its scenery.'

Then past her drifted a party of English tourists, also with 'Murray' in their hands and on their lips. 'Oh, mamma!' exclaimed a young lady, 'this lake is of very irregular shape, assuming near its west extremity the form of a cross. Do you see? There is one arm, we are approaching another, and there is the leg.'

'My dear,' said her mother, 'don't say leg; it is improper; say stem.'

'And, mamma, how true "Murray" is!—is it not wonderful? He says that at this part the shores of the lake are undulating hills clothed with verdure, and dotted with houses and villas. He really must have seen the place to describe it so accurately.'

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom; and then, after a pause, 'Gracious goodness!'

Lambert Pennycomequick took no notice of his mother's exclamations, till a third 'gracious goodness,' escaping her like the discharge of a minute-gun at sea, called his attention to her, and he asked, 'Well, what is it?' As he received no answer, he said, 'I don't believe in that honey served up at breakfast. It is not honey at all, but syrup in which stewed pears have soaked.'

'Upon my word!' gasped Mrs. Sidebottom.

'What is the matter, mother? Oh yes, lovely scenery. By George, so it is. I believe it is all a hoax about chamois. I have been told that they knock goats on the head, and so the flesh is black, or rather dark-coloured, and it is served as chamois, and charged accordingly.'

'This is extraordinary!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Yes—first rate,' said Lambert. 'Our Yorkshire wolds don't quite come up to the Alps, do they?'

But Mrs. Sidebottom was not lost in wonder at the beauty of the landscape, she was watching intently a gentleman in a light suit, of a military cast, wearing a white hat and a puggaree, with moustache and carefully curled whiskers, who was marching the deck alongside of another gentleman, stout, ordinary-looking, and comfortable in appearance, like a plump bullfinch.

'Look at my watch!' said the gentleman in the light suit, and as there were vacant places beside Mrs. Sidebottom, the two gentlemen left pacing the deck and seated themselves on the bench near her.

'Look at my watch!—Turned black, positively black, as if I had kept it against a vulcanized india-rubber stomach-belt. If you want evidence—there it is. I haven't cleaned it. No, I keep it as a memorial to me to be thankful to the beneficent Heaven which carried me through—which carried me through.'

Mrs. Sidebottom saw a silver watch-case extended to be exhibited, the dingy colour that silver acquires when exposed to gas.

'I wish, sir—I beg your pardon, my lord—you will excuse me, but by accident—by the merest accident—I caught sight of your address and name on your luggage—I wish, my lord, I were going with you to Andermatt, and I would take you a promenade round the backs of the hotels, and let you smell—smell, my lord—as rich a bouquet of accumulated deleterious odours as could be gathered into one—odours, my lord, diphtheritical, typhoidiacal. You see my face—I have become mottled through blood-poisoning. I was gangrened at Andermatt by the deadly vapours there. I thank a merciful Heaven, with my strong constitution and by the warning afforded by my watch, I

escaped death. I always carry about with me a silver timepiece, not one of gold, for sanitary reasons—the silver warns me of the presence in the atmosphere of sulphuretted hydrogen—of sewage gas—it blackens, as the arm of Lady Thingabob—I forget her name, perhaps she was of your lordship's family—as the arm, the wrist of her ladyship, was blackened by the grip of a spectre. I see you are bound for the Hôtel du Grand Prince. I went there, and there I inhaled the vapours of death, or rather of disease. I moved to the Hôtel Impérial, and was saved. There, and there only, the drainage is after English models, and there, and there only are you safe from the fumes of typhoid, the seeds of typhus, the corpuscles of diphtheria, and the—the—the what-d'ye-call-ems of cholera. You will excuse my speaking to you, perhaps, forcing myself—unworthy—on your distinguished self.'

'Oh, certainly, certainly.'

'But when I saw your name, my lord, and considered what you are, and what the country would lose were you to run the risk unforewarned, that I ran, I ventured to thrust myself upon you.'

'I am really most obliged to you.'

'Well—who is it said "We are all one flesh, and so feel sympathy one with another"? Having suffered, my lord, suffered so recently, and seeing you, my lord, you, you—about—but there—not another word, *Homo sum, nil humanum*—but I forget the rest, it is long since I was at school, and I have not kept up my classics.'

'I really am most indebted to you—and you think that the Hôtel Impérial——'

'I am sure of it. I had my blood tested, I had my breath analyzed. There were diatoms in one, and bacilli in the other, and—I am alive, alive to say it; thanks to the salubrious air and the careful nursing of the Hôtel Impérial.'

The nobleman looked nearly as mottled in counte-

nance as the other ; this was caused by the alarm produced by the revelations of his interlocutor.

'Don't you think,' he said, 'that I had better avoid Andermatt?'

'On no account, my lord. You are safe at the Impérial. I cannot say that you will be safer elsewhere. I have been to Berne to the University Professors to have the atmosphere of the several hotels analyzed for my own private satisfaction. It was costly—but what of that?—it satisfied me. These are the results: Hôtel du Cerf—three decimal two of sulphuretted hydrogen, two decimal eight of malarious matter, one, no decimal, of typhoidal germ. Hôtel de la Couronne d'Or—three decimal one of sulphuretted hydrogen, five decimal three of compound fermenting putrifio-bacteritic stuff. Hôtel du Grand Prince—eight decimal one of diphtheritic effluvium, occasional traces of scarlet-fever germs, and a trace—a trace of trichinus spiralis.'

'Good heavens!'—his lordship turned livid—'allow me, sir, to shake your hand ; you have conferred on me a lasting favour. I shall not forget it. I was bound for the Hôtel du Grand Prince. What about the Impérial?'

'Nothing—all salubrious, mountain air charged with ozone, and not a particle of deleterious matter in it.'

'I shall certainly go there—most certainly. I had telegraphed to the Grand Prince ; but, never mind, I had rather pay a forfeit and put up at the Impérial.'

'Would you mind, my lord, giving my card to the proprietor? It will ensure you receiving every attention. I was there when ill, and am pleased to recommend the attentive manager. My name is Yeo—Colonel Yeo—Colonel Beaple Yeo, East India Company Service, late of the Bombay Heavy Dragoons. Heavies we were called—Heavies, my lord.'

'Will you excuse me?' said the stout little nobleman ; 'I must run and speak to my lady. 'Pon my

word, this is most serious. I must tell her all you have been so good as to communicate to me. What were the statistics relative to the Grand Prince?'

'Eight decimal one—call it eight of diphtheritic effluvium, traces of scarlet-fever germs, and of trichinus spiralis. You know, my lord, how frightful, how deadly, are the ravages of that pest.'

'Bless me!' exclaimed his lordship, 'these foreigners—really they should not attempt to draw English—Englishmen and their families to their health resorts without making proper provisions in a sanitary way. Of course, for themselves, it doesn't matter; they are foreigners, and are impervious to these influences; or, if not, and carried off by them—well, they are foreigners! But to English—it is outrageous! I'll talk to my lady.'

'Lambert,' said Mrs. Sidebottom in a low tone to her son, 'for goodness' sake don't forget; we must go to the Hôtel Impérial.'

But low as she had spoken, her neighbour in the light suit heard her, turned round and saw her. Not the least abashed, he raised his hat, and with a flush of pleasure exclaimed, 'Ah! how do you do, my dear madam—my dear, dear madam? This is a treat—a treat indeed; the unexpected is always doubly grateful.' He looked round to see that his lordship was out of hearing, and then said in a lower tone, 'You misconstrued me—you misinterpreted me. I had guaranteed you fifteen per cent., and fifteen per cent. you should have had. If you have lost it, it is through want of confidence in me—in me—in Colonel Beaple Yeo, of the Bombay Heavies. Had you trusted me—but ah! let bygones be bygones. However, an explanation is due. I writhe under the imputation of not being above-board and straight—straight as an arrow. But what can you do with a man like Mr. Philip Pennycomequick? The landowners at Bridlington got wind of the plan. They

scented Iodinopolis. Their greed was insatiable, they demanded impossible prices. There was nothing for it but for me to beat a retreat, make a strategic move to the rear, feign to abandon the whole thing, throw it up and turn my attention elsewhere. Then, when they were in a state of panic, my design was to re-appear and buy the land on my own terms, not any more on theirs. Why, my dear madam, I would have saved the shareholders thousands on thousands of pounds, and raised the interest from perhaps a modest seven to twenty-five per cent., and a decimal or so more. But I was not trusted, the money confined to me was withdrawn, and others will make fortunes instead of us. I schemed, others will carry out my scheme. *Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes*, and you know the rest, *aratis boves*, and so on.'

Then Beaple Yeo stood up and handed his card to Mrs. Sidebottom, saying, 'You will at least do me this favour; give my card to the proprietor of the Hôtel Impérial, and he will care for you as for a princess of the blood royal.' Then he stalked away.

Mrs. Sidebottom turned dejectedly to her son. 'Lamb, I believe I was premature.' After all, there was management in that affair. Of course his was the right way to bring those landowners to their knees. Let us take a turn.'

Beaple Yeo had now attached himself to another party of strangers—tourists, whose acquaintance he had probably made at an hotel in Lucerne; and he walked the deck with them. When they were fore, then Mrs. Sidebottom and her son were in the rear, but when they turned on their heels, then she turned also and walked aft, and heard their conversation during that portion of the walk. The subject was St. Bernard dogs, and apparently Beaple Yeo had some scheme connected with them which he was pro-pounding.

'My dear sirs—when the St. Gothard tunnel is com-

plete—answer me—what will become of the hospice? To what use can it be put? It will be sold for a song, as not a traveller will cross the mountain when he can pass under it. For a song—literally for a "song of sixpence." Now, can you conceive of a place more calculated by nature as a nursery of Mount St. Bernard dogs—and the necessary buildings given away—given for nothing, to save them from crumbling into ruin? There is a demand, a growing demand for Mount St. Bernard dogs, that only wants a little coaxing to become a perfect *furore*. We will send one as a present to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. We will get in France an idea that the St. Bernard dog is a badge of the Republic, and that all true Republicans are bound to have Mount St. Bernard dogs. We will get some smart writers in America to dash off some sparkling articles in the illustrated magazines, and the demand becomes furious. Say the population of France is thirty-seven millions; actually it is more, and of these, two thirds—say twenty-five millions—are Republicans, and of these, one half are in a position to buy Mount St. Bernard dogs, and we fan the partisan fever to a height, by means of the press, which is easily done by dropping a few pounds into the hands of writers and proprietors. Say that one-third only of those in a position to buy the dogs, actually ask for them—that makes five millions of Mount St. Bernard dogs to be supplied to France alone. Then consider England, if it becomes the fashion there, and it will become the fashion, if the Princess of Wales accepts a dog from us, and walks about with one. Every lady of distinction, and then, in the next year, every servant-girl, will want a St. Bernard dog. And further—I have calculated that we can feed a dog at less than three farthings a day; say the total cost is a guinea. I have made inquiries and I find I shall be able to buy up the broken meat at a very low figure from the great hotels of Switzer-

land during the season. This will be conveyed to the hospice and there frozen. So it will keep and be doled out to the dogs daily, as required, Let us say that the interest on the outlay in purchasing the hospice and in maintaining the staff of dog-keepers be one guinea per dog; that makes the total outlay two guineas on each pup, and a pup a year old we shall not sell under ten pounds. Now calculate the profit for yourself—eight pounds a dog, and four millions supplied to France alone to enthusiasts for the Republic, and quite two millions to England to those who imitate her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, and seven millions to the United States for Americans who copy French or English fashions, and you have a total of thirteen millions of dogs at eight pounds each, a clear profit of one hundred and twenty-five millions. If we put the matter in decimals——'

The party turned and were before Mrs. Sidebottom. She could not hear what followed.

'My dear Lamb,' whispered she, 'did you hear that? What a chance! What a head the colonel has!'

At the next revolution Mrs. Sidebottom heard something more about the dog scheme.

'You see, gentlemen, the splendid thing is that the dogs suffer from pulmonary complaints when in the plains, and will not breed away from the eternal snows—two great advantages to us. Shares—preference shares at ten pounds—are to be subscribed in full, others as called in at intervals of six months. I myself guarantee fifteen per cent., but as you see for yourselves, gentlemen, the scheme cannot fail to succeed and the profits will be overwhelming.'

'Are you going on to Andermatt?' asked one of the gentlemen walking with Beaple Yeo.

'No, sir, I have had a bad attack; you can see the traces in my face. I will also show you my watch, how it was blackened. I have been ordered by my

medical advisers to cruise up and down the lake of the Five Cantons, and inhale the air off the water till I am thoroughly restored. By the way, if you are going to the Hôtel Impérial at Andermatt would you take my card to the proprietor? He is interested about the dogs.'

Beaple Yeo now crossed the deck to a party that was clustered together at the bulwarks with an opera glass that was passed from hand to hand. It consisted of a tall man with a broad-brimmed hat, bushy black whiskers, a white tie and clerical coat, his wife, his sister, and five daughters. A comfortable religiosity surrounded the group as a halo.

Beaple Yeo raised his hat. 'Beg pardon, sir, a clergyman?'

'Yes, I am.'

'And a dean, doubtless. You will excuse my interrupting you, but I have ventured here thinking you might like to know about a very remarkable movement after the Truth in Italy, in the heart and centre of ignorance and superstition. Count Caprili is the leading spirit. It is no use, sir, as no doubt you are aware, pulling at the leaves and nipping the extremities of the Upas, you must strike at the root, and that is what my dear friend Count Caprili is doing. He is quite an evangelist, inspired with the utmost enthusiasm. I have here a letter from him descriptive of the progress the Truth is making in Rome—in Rome itself. It is in Italian; do you read Italian, sir?'

'N—no, but, mother, can you?' to his wife.

'No, but Minny has learned it'—of a daughter, who reddened to the roots of her fair hair and allowed that if it were in print she might make it out.

'Never mind,' said Beaple Yeo, or Colonel Yeo as he now called himself, 'I can give you the contents in a few words. A year ago his little congregation numbered twenty, it now counts one hundred and eighty-

five, and at times even a couple of decimals more. At this rate he reckons that the whole of the Eternal City will have embraced the Truth in twenty-five years and two months, unless the eagerness to embrace it grows in geometrical instead of arithmetical progression. In Florence and Turin the increase is even more rapid. Indeed, it may fairly be said that Superstition is undermined, and that the whole *fabric will* collapse. Between ourselves I know as a *fact that the* Pope when he heard of the success of *Count Caprili* attempted to commit suicide, and has to be watched day and night, he is such a prey to despair. You have perhaps seen my letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject; they appeared in some of the papers. Only one thing is needed to crown the whole movement with success, and that is money. The Count has urged me to act as his intermediary—secretary and treasurer—as regards England and America, and I shall be most happy to forward to him any contributions I may receive.'

'Dear me,' said the dean, 'this is most interesting. Have any of our bishops taken up the matter?'

'In letters that I have they express the deepest interest in it.'

'I shall be most happy to subscribe a sovereign,' said the dean, fumbling in his purse.

'And I also,' said his wife.

'And I as well,' put in his sister.

'I will note all in my book of contributions,' said Yeo, receiving the money, and finding to his disgust that he had been given twenty-franc, instead of twenty-shilling pieces. 'Would you mind, sir, if you go to—as I take it for granted you will—if you go to the Hôtel Impérial——'

'Ah! we were going to the Cerf.'

'That is a very third-rate inn, hardly suitable for a dignitary of the Church. But if you will take my card, Beaple Yeo, of the Bombay Heavies, to the pro-

prietor of the Hôtel Impérial, he will treat you well, and be reasonable in his charges. He is most interested in the movement of Signor Caprili, and is a convert, but secretly; ask him about the movement, and he will open to you; show him my card, and he will confide his religious views to you.'

'I am most obliged. We will certainly go to the Impérial. Ah, mamma! here we are at the landing-place.'

As Mrs. Sidebottom left the boat at the station which she called Flue-ellen, she held out her hand to Colonel Yeo.

'I hope bygones will be bygones,' she said. 'I will take some shares in the St. Bernard dogs—preference shares, please.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN HÔTEL IMPÉRIAL.

SALOME had found her sister at the Imperial Hotel at Andermatt. Janet was one of those persons whose bodily condition varies with their spirits. When depressed, she looked and indeed felt ill; when happy, she looked and felt as if nothing were the matter with her. Janet had been greatly tried by the double shocks of her husband's death and the discovery of her parentage. She had been taken into the secret because it could not be kept from her, when the man Schofield, *alias* Beaple Yeo, suddenly arrived at Mergatroyd, just after the flood and the disappearance of Jeremiah Pennycomequick, at the time when she was sharing her mother's room instead of Salome.

Mrs. Cusworth at that time was in great distress of mind at the loss of her master and friend; and when her brother-in-law, the father of the two girls whom she had brought up as her own, unexpectedly appeared

and asked for money and clothing, she confided her difficulty to Janet, and between them they managed to bribe him to depart and leave them in peace. Mrs. Cusworth had sacrificed a large slice out of her savings to secure his departure, and trusted thereby to get rid of him for ever.

When Janet returned to France, she found everything in confusion; the factory at Elbœuf was stopped, the men who had been employed in it had assumed arms against the Germans, and were either shot, taken captive, or dispersed. Her sister-in-law was almost off her head with excitement and alarm for her children, three girls just out of school. Prussian officers had been quartered in her house, and had carried off some of her valuables, and ransacked the cellar for the best wines.

Janet had caught cold that night in the train when it was delayed by the flood, on the way to Mergatroyd, and it had settled on her chest, and left a cough that she could not shake off. Anxiety and worry had told on her joyous disposition, and deprived it of its elasticity. She gave way to discouragement. Her husband's affairs were unsettled, and could not be put to rights till the war and the results of the war were over, and the current of ordinary business commenced its sober, even flow.

She had been ordered to Mentone for the winter, and then to spend the summer high up in the Alps, where the air was pure and bracing. She had come, accordingly, to Andermatt, and her sister-in-law had sent her three school-girl daughters to be with her; to look after her, Madame Labarte had said; to be looked after by her, Janet found was expected. They were nice enough girls, with simple minds, but it was a responsibility imposed on Janet at a time when she required complete relaxation from care.

At Andermatt the fresh air was rapidly restoring Janet to her normal condition of cheerfulness, and was

giving her back the health she lacked, when her father arrived, impecunious, of course, and let her understand that he had come there to be supported by her, and to get out of her what he could. It would have been bad enough to have this dreadful man there posing as her father had she been alone. It was far worse with the three girls, her nieces, under her charge, and in her dismay she had a relapse, and wrote off to Salome an agonizing entreaty to come to her aid.

Janet had been left comfortably off, but till her husband's affairs were settled it was not possible for her to tell what her income would really amount to. The factory was again working, a competent overlooker had been found, and a suitable working partner taken into the firm to carry it on. In all probability Madame Baynes would be very well off, but at present she had not much ready money at her disposal.

Mr. Schofield, or Colonel Yeo, as he pleased to call himself now, was a different-looking man at this time to the wretched object who had presented himself at Mergatroyd, asking for clothing and cash, rather more than a year ago—indeed, eighteen months ago. He was well dressed, trim, held himself erect, and assumed a military air and some pomposity, as though the world were going well with him. He had carried away a little, but only a very little, of the plunder from Bridlington, and he knew very well that what he had would not last him long. It was satisfactory to have a well-to-do daughter to fall back on, whose purse he could dip his fingers into when they itched. But Beaple Yeo could not be idle. He had an active mind and a ready invention, and he began operations on his own account, partly as tout on the lake steamers for the Hôtel Impérial at Andermatt, receiving a fee for every tourist he sent to it, and partly by his speculations in dogs and missionaries. Janet would have run away from Andermatt, but for the three encumbrances, whom it would not have been

easy to move to a secret and precipitate flight without explanations to them or their mother—explanations which would have been awkward; moreover, she feared that it would be unavailing, as her father could easily discover the way she had gone and follow her. There were only three passes in addition to the road up from Amsteg by which she could leave, and it would not be possible for her to depart by any of these routes unknown to Colonel Yeo. Her first alarm and uneasiness abated when he took himself off to tout on the lake; and she resolved on remaining where she was till Salome came and gave her advice what course to pursue.

Salome decided that it was the best policy to remain where they were, and not attempt flight. She saw that her sister was suffering, and she determined to remain with her, to protect and comfort her, and await what the future had in store for herself. She naturally felt a great longing to be at home with her baby, but at the same time she recognised that the situation at home was not tolerable, that some change must take place before she could return to Mergatroyd.

One day, Colonel Yeo was in the *salle-à-manger* at the Hôtel Impérial preparing for *table d'hôte*, when a lady entered, well dressed, dark haired, with fine eyes, and swept up the room towards an alcove where were small tables, at which either a party sat that desired to be alone, or tourists not intending to dine at *table d'hôte* but *à la carte*. She walked slowly, with a certain dignity, and attracted all eyes. Every head was turned to observe her, and her eyes, in return, passed over as mustering and apprising those who occupied their seats at the table. She accepted the homage of interest she excited, as though it were her own.

What was her age? She had arrived at that period of life at which for some time a woman stands

still—she was no girl, and no one could say that she was *passée.*

'Waiter!' called Colonel Yeo.

'Yes, sir—in a minute, sir.'

'Who is that lady in the gray dress with red trimmings?'

'Gray dress, sir? The stout lady with the little husband?'

'Nonsense, that distinguished lady—young—there at the table in the alcove.'

'Yes, sir—don't know, sir. Will inquire.'

Off skipped the waiter to carry round the soup, and forgot to inquire.

'Waiter!' called Colonel Yeo to another, the head *garçon.* 'Who is that prepossessing young lady, yonder?'

'Lady, sir? Don't know her name—I have seen her often everywhere, at Homburg, Baden-Baden, Milan.'

'What is she?'

'Do you mean of what nation, sir?—I believe American. Said to be very rich—worth millions.'

'Worth millions!' echoed Colonel Yeo. 'Can I change my seat and get near her?'

During dinner Colonel Yeo could not keep his eyes off her.

'Worth millions, and so good-looking!' Which would interest her most—his dogs or his missionaries?—or could she be interested in himself?

He called for champagne. He put one arm over the back of his chair, held his champagne-glass in the other hand, and half turned, looked hard at the lady. She observed his notice of her, and their eyes met. Her eyes said as distinctly as eyes can speak, 'Look at me as much as you will, I expect to be admired, I do not object to be admired, I freely afford to all who take pleasure in beautiful objects the gratification of contemplating me. But who are you?'

'Waiter,' said Beaple Yeo, calling the head *garçon*, 'if—by chance that lady wants to know who I am—just say that I am Colonel Yeo, of the Bengal Heavies—a claimant for the Earldom of Schofield.'

At a table near that occupied by the lady sat Salome, Janet, and the three young girls Labarte. An arrangement had been come to with Yeo that he was not to associate with them, to hold aloof, and to receive money for doing this. He had got what he could, or could for the time being, out of his daughter Janet, and was therefore inclined to devote his energies to new arrivals.

'*Garçon*,' called the lady in gray and red.

'*De suite, m'selle.*'

'Who is that gentleman yonder, drinking champagne?'

'M'selle, the colonel! *c'est un milord.*'

'English?'

'But certainly.'

'Rich?'

'Rich! the colonel! rich! *Mon Dieu! C'est un milord Anglais!*'

'Is he staying here long?'

'Ah, m'selle! Where else could he stay? All the season.'

'What is his title?'

'*Mon Dieu!* I can't say—*Scoville? Scoville?* But yes, an earl—Comte de Scoville, I believe, m'selle.'

'Waiter—should he or anyone else inquire who I am, say an American—a millionaire, as I told you before.'

'He has already asked,' said the waiter, with a knowing look.

In the alcove where the lady sat at a table by herself was also a larger table, as already said, occupied by Janet and her party, and the lady in gray and red attracted the attention of the girls. These three girls

were much alike; they ranged in age from sixteen to nineteen, had dark eyes and fresh cheeks, looked a mixture of English and French blood, and though they spoke English with their aunt and Salome, they spoke it with a foreign accent, and when they talked to each other naturally fell into French.

They were not beautiful, were undeveloped girls without much character apparently. The strange lady evidently exercised their minds, and they looked a good deal at her, and passed low remarks to each other concerning her. Their curiosity was roused, and when she was not at her place they searched the visitors' book for her name, and for some information about her.

'*Ma tante*,' pleaded the eldest, 'which do you think she is of all these on this page?'

'*Mais*, Claudine, how can I tell?'

'Oh! *Ma tante*, do ask the waiter.'

'But why, Claudine? She does not interest me.'

'Oh, we are so puzzled about her; she looks so aristocratic and dresses so well, and has so many changes. She must employ a Parisian milliner. Oh, we do wish we knew where she got that charming walking-dress of gray and gold.'

'*Garçon!*' Janet Baynes called a waiter. 'Who is the lady who sits at this little table here?'

'Madame—a rich American, a millionaire, of New York.'

'A millionaire!'

The heads of the young ladies went together, and as the lady entered all their eyes watched her with eagerness—so beautiful, so distinguished-looking, so wealthy.

'What is her name, waiter?'

'Mademoiselle Du Rhame.'

'A French name?'

'Ah, madame, it stands there in the visitor's book,' and he pointed to Artemisia Durham, Chicago, U.S.A.

It was not possible for the American lady to fail to observe the interest she excited in the young girls. She saw their heads go together, then fly apart when she appeared; at table she caught their dark eyes watching her, and when they saw that they were noticed, away flew their eyes like scared birds. Miss Durham condescended to look at the girls with a half smile; she did not object to their admiration, and she did not court it.

What was more remarkable than the interest awakened in those children was that which she certainly aroused in Salome. There was a something, a mystery, a fascination in the woman that held Salome and drew her towards the stranger. She felt that this woman was her reverse in every particular, a woman with experience and knowledge of the world, with a power of making herself agreeable when she chose, and to whomsoever she chose. Salome had spent her life in a very narrow sphere, had made few acquaintances, had not had wide interests, and though she was well educated, had no extended range of ideas. Her position had ever been uncertain; she had been neither a member of the lower artisan class, nor accepted as an equal by those belonging to the upper class—that is, the employing class in Mergatroyd. Her mother had been housekeeper to Mr. Pennycomequick, and consequently she had not been received as a lady by such as regarded themselves as the ladies of Mergatroyd—the manufacturers' wives and daughters, and those of the doctor, and the solicitor, and the parson. This ambiguity of position had in one manner made her strong and independent in character, but in another, timid and reserved. Where she knew she had duties to perform, there she acted without hesitation; but in social matters, in everything connected with life in the cultured world, with its fashions and etiquettes, she was doubtful and uncomfortable. She was now in the presence of

a woman who moved with self-consciousness and assurance in that very sphere in which Salome was bewildered; consequently she watched Miss Durham with wonder, interest, and a desire to know her, and wrest her secret from her. That she was a good woman and worth knowing, deserving of confidence and regard, Salome never doubted. Guileless herself, she believed everyone else to be without guile.

When Janet Baynes thought that the girls had been too forward, almost discourteous in staring at the stranger, she looked apologetically at Miss Durham, who met the look with a smile that said, plainly as words, 'Allow them to stare at me—it amuses them and does not hurt me—they may profit by a study of me. Queens of beauty, of fashion, or of wealth expect to be looked at.' Then Mrs. Baynes smiled in reply, and her smile said, 'Indeed, I cannot wonder at these girls admiring you, for you are deserving of admiration.'

Whether this conversation of glances would have gone any further may be doubted, had it not been that the French-speaking waiter who had attended on the ladies, disappeared. Whether he was taken ill, or whether, caught doing wrong, he had been dismissed, or whether he had been enticed elsewhere by a higher wage, nobody knew and nobody cared to ask. Waiters are no more thought about by guests than are the mules and horses employed on expeditions. He was succeeded by a German, or German-Swiss who could not speak French, and only an unintelligible English; and the demoiselles Labarte and Madame Baynes on principle would not have asked for a bit of bread in German had they known how to do so. Salome knew little or no German, and the ladies were in difficulties. Claudine was out of sorts—somewhat feverish, but nothing serious—and her aunt advised that she should drink *orgeat* instead of wine. The waiter was puzzled. '*Ach!*

eine Drehorgel. Freilich, freilich, bestelle gleich,' and he rushed off to find an organ-grinder with a marmot.

Then Miss Durham good-naturedly interfered, allayed the wrath of the ladies at the inherent Teutonic stupidity which never can do right, and ordered what was really required.

The *orgeat* broke the ice, conversation began, and next day the American lady was seated at the same table as the Labartes, with Salome and Janet. It would be impossible for the latter to get on with the stupid, stubborn German waiter, unassisted by someone who was able to speak and understand the language of barbarians. At first there was but the exchange of ordinary courtesies, but now that the three girls were able to speak to the stranger, they hardly contained their attentions within ordinary bounds; they rivalled each other who should gain pre-eminent favour with the lady who wore such charming toilettes.

The girls were triumphant; they had formed the acquaintance; that was the one advantage that grew out of a German waiter. Salome was pleased she could now learn of this brilliant accomplished woman; and Janet was satisfied because she was feeling dull herself, and wanted a lively companion to relieve the tedium.

Miss Durham had plenty to say for herself. She was clever, amusing, interesting. She had seen much of the world—knew most watering-places, baths, and health-resorts in Europe. The meals, which had passed somewhat heavily before, now became gatherings full of liveliness. Janet brisked up, felt better in health and looked quite well, proposed excursions and schemed picnics. The whole party now found so much to talk about that they were reluctant to leave the table. Suddenly a pallor and tremor came over Mrs. Baynes. She looked up. Beaple Yeo was standing, white hat in hand, with the puggaree trailing on the floor, near the table.

'I take the liberty,' he said; 'introduce me.'

Janet looked at Salome, and Salome at Janet.

'I see,' said Yeo; 'my relatives are in doubt how to introduce me whilst my claim is being presented in the Upper House. Call me Colonel Yeo, of the Bengal Heavy Dragoons. Hang my title! I shall find the coronet heavy enough when it is fitted to my brow; the eight pearls—eight pearls; and as many strawberry-leaves—strawberry-leaves. I will not assume my title till it is adjudged to me by the House of Lords. You know your history of England. The attainder was for rebellion, and I now reassert my claim to the Earldom of Schofield.'

'And I,' said the American lady, 'am Artemisia Durham, of Chicago.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TWO WOMEN.

'YOU will excuse me, I know you will,' said Yeo, looking from one to another, but especially at the American, 'but I have just been informed that there are chamois visible on a mountain shoulder, high, high, high up—and as there is an excellent telescope—a telescope—outside, I thought I would make so bold as to interrupt an animated conversation to bring to your notice this interesting fact.'

'Thank you—I do not wish to see chamois,' said Salome slowly and coldly.

'Nor I—I do not care to expose myself to the sun,' said Janet.

'Oh, aunt! oh, aunt! But they are so shy, so rare!' from the three Labarte girls.

'Really, for my part,' said Miss Durham, 'I am curious to see them. Though I have been before in the Alps I have never had the good fortune——'

'Then allow me to conduct you!' exclaimed Colonel Yeo gallantly.

'Thank you, sir, I can find the telescope myself,' answered the American lady. Then, to her companions: 'You will excuse my running off. I really am desirous of seeing chamois.'

She sailed through the *salle-à-manger*, with Beaple Yeo prancing after her, hat in hand, and puggaree waving. The Labartes looked at their aunt pleadingly.

'Very well, girls; if you wish, go after Miss Durham;' and away scampered the three.

'Oh, Salome!' sighed Janet, 'I cannot bear him! He promised not to interfere with us.'

Salome sighed also. 'We must bear with him a little longer. He will find this place dull and take himself off.'

'But, Salome, what does he mean about being Earl of Schofield? About the pearls and strawberry-leaves?'

'Money—of course—always money.'

'I wish I had not let the girls go after him—to the telescope.'

'It is a pity—but Miss Durham is there.'

'Yes, and with her they are safe. You like her?'

'I admire her. I think I like her. If I were a man I should fall madly in love with her, but——'

'But what, Salome?'

'My dear, I don't know.'

In the meantime Beaple Yeo was adjusting the telescope, peering through it, and pressing on Miss Durham to look just at one point. 'Ah! quick—before they move.' Then asking if the sight were right, peering again, wiping the lens with his silk handkerchief, and finally when either the chamois had disappeared, or the focus could not be got right, abandoning the telescope altogether to the three girls.

'One, two, three churches here,' said Mr. Yeo. 'And one a pilgrimage chapel. You have perhaps

seen some friars in snuff-coloured habits prowling about. Shocking, is it not? Signor Caprili—you have heard of the extraordinary efforts he is making to spread the Truth, the naked Truth—I mean, I beg pardon, the unvarnished Truth. Are you interested in missionary enterprise?'

'Not in the least. Superstition is charmingly picturesque. How gracefully those towers and spires stand out against the mountains! And that chapel perched on a rock. I would not have it abolished for the world. We have not such things in America—we come to the Old World to see them.'

'Then, perhaps dogs,' said Yeo. 'You are interested in Mount St. Bernard dogs, and would, no doubt, like to introduce one across the ocean to your fellow-countrywomen. Magnificent creatures, and so noble in character! How their heroism, their self-sacrifice, their generosity, stand out in contrast with our petty human vices! Verily I think we might with advantage study the dog. I do not mind confiding to you, madam, that a colossal scheme is on foot for the establishment of an emporium of these noble creatures, and that money only is needed to float it.'

'I assure you,' said Miss Durham, 'I am not in the least interested in dogs.'

'Not as a speculation?'

'Not even as a speculation.'

Beaple Yeo was silenced.

'Excuse me,' said Miss Durham, 'you were saying something about strawberry-leaves—the wild Alpine strawberry is delicious.'

'Oh! you misunderstand me,' said Yeo, elevating himself to his full height, removing his hat, shaking the puggaree, and putting on his hat again; 'I was alluding to the coronet of an earl to which I lay claim.'

'Then you are not an earl yet?'

'I am not one, and yet I am one. The earldom of

Schofield was attaindered—attaindered at the Jacobite rebellion. My great-grandfather took the wrong side and suffered accordingly—suffered ac—cor—ding—ly. The attainder was but for a while. Preston Pans was 1745; Culloden, 1746, April the sixteenth, and my great-grandfather's attainder next year, attainder for one hundred and twenty-five years—which lapses this year, one eight seven two. The earldom is secure—I have but to take it up—to take it up; in other words resume it, and Beaple Yeo is Earl Schofield.'

Salome and Janet appeared to call the three girls to them, and were a little surprised to find the colonel and the American young lady already on intimate terms. They were seated on a bench, side by side, and Colonel Yeo was gesticulating with his hand, and whisking his puggaree in explanation of the Schofield peerage claim; was following the genealogical tree on the palm of one hand with the finger of the other; was waving away objections with his hat, and clenching arguments by clapping both hands on his knees. He was a man so richly endowed by nature with imagination that he could not speak the truth. There are such men and women in the world—to whom romance and rhodomontade is a necessity, even when no object is to be gained by saying what is not true. Some people embroider on a substratum of fact, but Beaple Yeo, and others of the like kidney, spin the threads and then weave their own canvas out of their own fancies, and finally embroider thereon as imagination prompts.

Darkness set in, that night as on every other, and most of the tourists had retired to bed, wearied with their walks and climbs, and those tarrying at Andermatt had also gone into the uncomfortable Swiss-German beds, tired with having nothing to do. Only two were awake, in separate wings of the hotel. One was Salome, the other the American stranger.

Salome had two candles lighted on the table, and

had been writing to Philip. She sat now, looking through the open window at the starry sky, with pen in hand, uncertain how to continue her letter. She wrote to her husband every few days, and expected from him, what she received without fail, letters informing her of the health and progress of the baby. His letters were formal and brief. When about to write he visited the nursery, inquired whether there were particulars to be sent to Mrs. Pennycomequick, and wrote verbatim the report of the nurse. Salome had, indeed, only received two letters, and the last had surprised and overwhelmed her. It contained news of the reappearance of Mr. Jeremiah. Her delight had been exceeding; its excess was now passed, and she sat wondering what would be the result of this return on the fortunes of Philip, and on their relations to each other. Philip's letter had been silent on both these points. He merely stated that his uncle had returned, was in robust health, and added a brief account of the circumstances of his escape and recovery. Not a word in his letter about his desire to see her again, not a hint that he was ready to forgive the wrong unintentionally done him. Both letters were stiff and colourless as if they had been business epistles, and many tears had they called from Salome's eyes.

Very different were her letters to him. Without giving utterance to her love, every line showed that her heart yearned for her husband, her baby, and for home. She wrote long letters, hoping to interest him in what she and her sister were about; she described the scenery, the novel sights, the flowers—she even enclosed two forget-me-nots with a wish that he would lay one on her baby's lips. She made no allusion to the past, and she did not tell him of her present trouble with Beaple Yeo, her father. She shrank from informing him that the man he hated was at Andermatt, the terror and distress of her sister and

herself. She had written a letter to Uncle Jeremiah, to enclose in that to her husband, and in that was not an expression which could lead him to imagine that her husband was estranged from her. She left this note open, that Philip might look at it if he pleased, before delivering it. She had broken off in the midst of her letter to Philip to write this, and now she resumed the writing to her husband. She was describing the hotel guests, and had come to an account of the Chicago heiress. She had written about her beauty, her eyes, her carriage, her reputed wealth, only her dresses she did not describe, she knew they would not interest a man. Then she proceeded to give some account of her qualities of mind and heart, and thereat her pen was stayed. She knew nothing of either. She had imagined a good deal—but positively had no acquaintance with the lady on which to form an opinion.

What was there in the lady that so fascinated her? She was attracted to her, she felt the profoundest admiration for her—and yet she was unable to explain the reason of the attraction. It was the consciousness that in this stranger were faculties, experiences, knowledge she had not—it was an admiration bred of wonder. She had no ambition to be like her, and she was not envious of her—but she almost worshipped her, because she was strong in everything that she, Salome, was weak. That she was, or might be weak in everything wherein Salome was strong never occurred to her humble mind. Then, still holding her pen, and still looking dreamily into the night sky, Salome passed in thought to her own situation, rendered doubly difficult by her father having attached himself to her sister. She could not desert Janet under the circumstances. She must be at her side to protect her from his rapacity and insolence. And yet she yearned with all the hunger of a mother's heart for her baby, that she might clasp it to her and

cover its innocent face and hands and feet with kisses. And Philip——. She loved him also, with the calm unimpassioned love that springs out of duty. She had liked him since first she saw him, and the liking had developed into love—a quiet, homely love, without hot fire in it, and yet a true, steady, honest love. She could not believe that her husband mistrusted her assurance that she had not knowingly deceived him. She did not know which was the most potent force acting on his mind—hatred of the man who was her father and anger at being unwittingly brought into relationship with him, or dread of the scandal that might come of the knowledge of the relationship. She had no confidence that her father would not become again involved in some disgraceful fraud which would bring his name before the public; and this dread, of course, must weigh on Philip as well. Beaple Yeo had already attempted to express money out of her. She was the wife of a rich Yorkshire manufacturer, and Janet was the widow of a rich Normandy manufacturer. He looked upon both as squeezable persons, only at first his efforts to squeeze had been directed upon Janet, who had not a husband to oppose him. Salome, however, saw that he would not be at rest till he had extorted money from Philip through her, and the dread of this kept her in constant unrest. How—she now asked herself, or the stars at which she was looking—how would the return of Jeremiah affect Philip's position and relieve her of this fear? If Jeremiah resumed the factory, then Philip would be no longer wealthy, and a prey for her father to fall upon.

As she sat thus, thinking and looking at the stars, so in the furthest wing of the same house was Artemisia Durham, also thinking and looking at the stars. She had extinguished her lights, and stood at the window. She was partly undressed, her dark hair flowed about her shoulders, and her arms were bare.

She had her elbow resting on the window-sill, and her chin was nestled into her palm, her fingers clenched on her lips. Her brows were contracted into a scowl. The face was no longer set, haughty in its beauty, and yet with a condescending smile; it was now even haggard, and over it contending emotions played in the starlight, altering its expression, unresisted, undisguised.

She thought of the admiration she had excited in the schoolgirls, and in their elders, the two ladies in deep mourning. A flicker of contempt passed over her countenance.

What was the admiration of three half-grown girls to her? Salome had attracted her notice more than Janet. She had observed Salome, whilst unseen by her, and thought she had made out her character—ordinary, duty-loving, conscientious, narrow. A character of all others most distasteful to Artemisia. She put her hands to her brow and pressed them about it. 'So, so,' she muttered. 'To have always an iron crown screwed tight round the brain. Insufferable!'

Then she shivered. The night air was cold in the Alps at that elevation. She fetched a light shawl of Barège wool and wrapped it round her, over her bare arms, and leaned both elbows of the folded arms on the window. Her thoughts again recurred to Salome, and she tried to scheme out the sort of life that would commend itself to such as she—a snug English home, with a few quiet, respectable servants, and a quiet, respectable gardener; a respectable and quiet husband, and a pony-trap, in the shafts of which trotted a quiet and respectable cob; improving magazines and sober books read in the house; occasional dull parties given, at which the clergy would predominate, and sing feeble songs and talk about their parishes; and then one or two quiet, respectable children would arrive who would learn their lessons exactly, and

strum on the piano at their scales. Artemisia's lips curled with disgust.

Her hands clenched under the shawl, and she uttered an exclamation of anger and loathing.

And what, she considered, had she herself to look to? She gazed dreamily at the stars, and tears rose in her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. Then, ashamed of her weakness, she left the window and paced her room—up and down, up and down—and it was as though through the open window, out of the night, streamed in dark forms, ugly recollections, uncomfortable thoughts, that crowded the room, filled every corner, occupied every nook—came in thicker, and darker, and more horrible, and she went to the window with a gasp of fear and shut out the night wind and the gleam of the stars, hoping at the same time to stop the entry of those haunting memories and hideous shapes.

The street window would not shut them out; the room was full of them, and their presence oppressed her. She could endure them no more. She struck a light and kindled the candles in the room.

What was that on her dressing-table? Only a little glass full of wild strawberry-leaves and fruit one of the admiring Labarte girls had picked and given to her and insisted on her taking to her room.

Artemisia laughed. She took the strawberries out of the water. She unclasped a necklet that was about her throat on which were Roman pearls. She put it around her head, and thrust the strawberry-leaves in between the pearls, then looked at herself in the glass and laughed, and as she laughed all the shadow-figures and ghostly recollections went tumbling one over the other out of the room by the keyhole, leaving her alone laughing, part ironically, part triumphantly, before the glass, looking at herself in her extemporized coronet.

LIBRARY

CHAPTER XL.

TWO MEN.

IF Jeremiah Pennycomequick supposed that he could slip back into the old routine of work without attracting much attention, and without impediment, he was quickly undeceived. His reappearance in Mergatroyd created a profound sensation. Everyone wanted to see him, and everyone had a hearty word of welcome. He was surprised at the amount of feeling that was manifested. He had lived to himself, seen little society, nevertheless he suddenly discovered that he had been popular. Everyone with whom he had been connected in however small a way respected him, and showed real pleasure at his return. The men at the mill—factory hands—would shake hands again and yet again, their honest and somewhat dirty faces shining with good will; the factory girls came about him with dancing eyes and 'Eh! but ah'm reet fain to see thee back agin!' The little tradespeople in Mergatroyd—the chemist, the baker, the grocer, ran out of their shops when he passed, to give a word of congratulation. The brother manufacturers—those who had been rivals even—called to see him and express their pleasure. The wives also dropped in—they could not await the chance of seeing him, they must come to his house and both see the man returned from the dead, and learn from his own lips why he had made them all believe he had perished. To all he gave the same account—he had been ill, and when he recovered found that he was already adjudged dead, and he resolved not to undeceive his relatives till he had seen how his nephew 'framed'—that is the word he used—an expressive Yorkshire word that means the fitting and shaping of a man for a place new to him.

Near Mergatroyd was a spring of water called 'California.' It had its origin thus. The owner of a field fancied there was coal beneath the surface, and he hired borers who perforated the several strata that underlay his turf till they were stopped by the uprush of water, that played like a fountain for many months and remained as a permanent spring. The owner had made great boast of the fortune he was going to make out of his coal mine, and when he came on nothing but water the people nick-named this spring California. But it was no ordinary spring; the water was so charged with gas that when a little match was held to it, flames flashed, and flickered about it. The water was so soft as to be in great request for tea-making. 'Eh,' said an old woman, 'Californey water be seah (so) good, tha wants nowt but an owd kettle and t'wâter to mak' th' best o' tea.'

It seemed to Jeremiah as if he had tapped a California, a fountain of sweet, flashing, abounding affection. He was moved, flattered by it, and greatly surprised, for it was wholly unanticipated. He was ignorant what he had done to occasion it.

But, indeed, a great deal of genuine regard and attachment grows imperceptibly about a man who has lived for a long time in a place without making any demands on his neighbours; has been just, reliable, and blameless in life. All this latent regard now manifested itself.

Philip was still in the house of his uncle a week after the reappearance of the latter. Jeremiah had not been able to go through the accounts and examine the condition of the business as thoroughly as he had intended. He had been distracted by visitors, and his mind unsettled by absence and by astonishment and gratification at the manifestation of good-will provoked by his return. He had said nothing more to Philip about leaving; Philip, however, had been in the little town inquiring for lodgings, but could find nothing

that would suit. In that small place it was not usual for furnished lodgings to be let. There was indeed a set of rooms over the baker's, but they were overrun by cockroaches; at the chemist's were two vacant rooms, but no accommodation for the nurse and baby. Then he had to face another difficulty: the nurse was young and good-looking, and there was no saying what scandal might be aroused by his migrating to lodgings with this nurse, if his wife did not return to him. At the draper's there were rooms, but they had a north aspect, and looked cold and damp. There was a cottage, unfurnished, he might take, but that adjoined a shoddy mill, and the atmosphere was clouded with 'devil's dust,' injurious to the lungs. Moreover, how could he purchase furniture when he had no money? His condition was uncertain, his prospects undefined, and he shrank from speaking to his uncle about them till Jeremiah had made his thorough investigation of the state of the business and had matured his opinion on Philip's management of it. Perhaps, also, Jeremiah had not as yet decided on what was to be done with regard to his nephew, and it would be injudicious to press him to a decision. In the meantime the uncertainty was distressing to Philip.

He read his wife's letters with mingled feelings. He could decide nothing with respect to her till his own future was made clear to him. He still harboured his resentment against the imposition, and, though he now no longer thought that Salome had been privy to it, he could not surmount the repugnance evoked by the fact of being related to that unprincipled rogue, Schofield. He was alive to the danger of such an alliance. Schofield was not the man to neglect the advantages to be gained by having a son-in-law—a man of character, position and substance. If Philip sank to being a mere clerk the fellow would be an annoyance no more, but as he prospered, and in

proportion as he made his way, gained the respect of his fellow-men, and enlarged his means, so would his difficulties with Schofield increase. The fellow would be a nuisance to him continually. If Schofield made himself amenable to the law, then his own connection with the daughter of a man in prison or a convict, would be a reproach and a scandal. If the scoundrel were at large, he would be an annoyance from which he never could hope to shake himself free.

The letters from his wife did not please him. Clearly Janet was not so ill as had been represented to him; not so ill as to require her sister there, especially as she had three nieces with her. He was uncomfortable without his wife—he was uncomfortable because his future was vague, and he associated the annoyance this caused him with her absence, and put it, unconsciously, to her account. He did not consider what his own conduct had been, and how he had almost driven her from the house and from her child, and he found fault with her for deserting him and the babe so readily on a frivolous excuse.

No doubt Salome was enjoying herself; she was so full of admiration over the scenery, the flowers, so struck with the variety of life she met with. What did she think of his situation without certain prospects? A nice party they formed at Andermatt—the five ladies—and Janet was well enough to enjoy excursions. The efforts Salome made to interest him annoyed him. He did not want to be interested; he resented her taking interest in what she saw.

And then, what about this stranger, this American lady, travelling by herself, with her pretty becoming dresses, who had attached herself to the party? Who was she? What were her belongings? What her character? Salome had no right to form a friendship, hardly an acquaintance, without first consulting him. It was very doubtful whether a lady, young

and beautiful, who travelled alone, was a desirable person to know; it was by no means unlikely that Salome would find out, when too late, that she had associated herself, and drawn the three Labarte girls into acquaintanceship with a woman who ought to be kept at a distance. Ladies travelling alone should invariably be regarded with suspicion. Ladies never ought to be alone—unmarried ones, he added hastily, remembering that he had allowed his own wife to make the journey to Andermatt unprotected. Unmarried ladies belong to families, and travel with their mothers or aunts, or some female relation; if quite young they go about in flocks with their governess. Single ladies! He shook his head. Salome really was inconsiderate. She acted on impulse, without thought. If she had been forced into conversation with this person she should have maintained her distance, and next day have contented herself with a bow, and the day after have been short-sighted, and not observed her at all. That was how he had behaved towards male acquaintances whom he did not think worth cultivating as friends. Acquaintances can always be dropped. The hand can be rigid when grasped for a shake, or can be twisting an umbrella, or be behind the back, or in a pocket.

Salome should have considered in making friends that there were others to be thought of besides herself, and that he radically disapproved of association with persons unattached.

In the last of the three letters he had received from his wife a whole side had been taken up with description of the single lady; it was obvious that this person, whoever she was, had set herself to gain influence over Salome, whilst Salome, inexperienced, was unable to resist, and the purpose of the stranger she did not divine. He became irritated at the expressions used by his wife concerning this fascinating stranger. He entertained a growing aversion for her,

He was quite sure that she was not a proper person for Salome to associate with.

He took up the letter, and putting his hands behind his back, paced the room. He was thoroughly out of humour with himself and with his wife, and as it never occurred to him that he should vent his dissatisfaction on himself, he poured it out on Salome.

A tap at the door, and following the tap in came Jeremiah.

'Look here!' exclaimed the old man as he entered. 'Here is a pretty kettle of fish. When is Salome returning?'

'I do not know,' answered Philip stiffly.

'Have you heard from her?'

'I have.'

'And she says nothing about returning?'

'Not a word. She seems to be enjoying the Alpine air and scenery—and making friends.' There was a tone of bitterness in these last words.

'But—she must return,' said Jeremiah. 'There is an upset of the whole bag of tricks. What do you suppose has happened?'

'I have not the least idea.'

'The cook had fits yesterday; that was why the dinner was spoiled. She has fits again to-day, and there will be no dinner at all. She has turned the servants out of the kitchen; they are sitting on the kitchen stairs, and she is storming within—and—I am convinced that the fits are occasioned by brandy. I sent her some yesterday when I was told she was in convulsions, and that was adding fuel to fire. It is a case of D.T., I fear. There is a black cat in the kitchen—or she thinks so, and is hunting it, throwing kettles and pots and pans at it—has smashed the windows, and most of the crockery. The maids are frightened. I have sent for the police; come with me. We must break open the kitchen door, and seize and bind the mad creature.'

'It will put us in a somewhat ridiculous position,' said Philip. 'Had we not better wait till the constable arrives, and hand her over formally to him?'

'And in the meantime allow her to smash everything the kitchen contains. Come on.'

The old man led the way, and Philip, first plucking at his shirt-collars to make sure they were right, followed. They found, as Jeremiah had said, the servants on the steps that descended to the kitchen. The nurse was also there.

'How came you here?' asked Philip—'and baby, too!—is this a place for him? Go back to the nursery.'

There was indeed an uproar in the kitchen. The cook was as one mad, howling, cursing, dashing about and destroying everything she could lay hand on—like the German Polter-geist.

Jeremiah burst the door open, and the two men entered.

Fortunately for Philip's dignity, the constable arrived at the same time, and the crazy woman was without difficulty and disarrangement of Philip's collars, controlled and conveyed to her bedroom.

As the party of men with their redfaced captive ascended the steps from the kitchen, Philip caught sight of the nurse and baby again. The former had disobeyed his orders; it was perhaps too much to expect of her to retire beyond sight of the drama enacted in the kitchen. Philip gave her notice to leave.

'This would never have happened had Salome been here,' said Jeremiah. 'And this is not all; that woman has found means of getting to my cellar, and she has drunk herself into this condition on my best whisky and brandy. I have only just discovered the ravages she has made.'

'I gave you the cellar key.'

'Yes; but she had another that fitted the lock. I

have had Mrs. Haigh here ; she has opened my eyes to a thing or two. Are you aware that the parlour-maid and my traveller Tomkins have been carrying on pretty fast? She asked leave to go to a funeral on Sunday, and went instead with Tomkins to Hollingworth Lake. They were seen there together in a boat.'

'There is something wrong,' said Philip, 'something I do not understand, about the washing. I do not know whether any account is kept of what goes to the wash, but I am quite sure that the wash consumes as much as it restores. I am reduced this week to one pocket-handkerchief. I cannot understand it. If I had had an influenza cold during the last fortnight I could see some reason for my being short this week, but conceive the awkwardness of having only one. And then my socks. They come back full of holes. I used not to wear them into great chasms—at least not since I have been here; now they return as of old when I was in furnished lodgings—only fit to be employed as floor-cloths.'

'I'll tell you what, Philip. Salome must return. I have been told by Mrs. Haigh that she saw your nursemaid take the baby only yesterday to Browne's Buildings, and there is scarlet-fever in several of the cottages there.'

'I have dismissed her.'

'Who? Salome?'

'No, the nurse.'

'But the mischief is done. She was there yesterday. I do not know how many days it takes for scarlet-fever to incubate, but that the child will have it I have very little doubt. Why, she went into Rhode's cottage where they have had five down with it, and two of them died. The rest are just in that condition of healing when infection is most to be feared. I heard this from Mrs. Haigh.'

'Good heavens!' Philip was frightened.

'Then,' continued Jeremiah, 'I do not suppose you are aware that Essie, the nursemaid, has been wearing your wife's jewellery. She had the audacity to appear in church on Sunday with a pretty Florentine mosaic brooch that I gave Salome many years ago. Mrs. Haigh saw it and recognised it.'

Philip fidgeted in his chair. 'I see,' said he, 'I was wrong in not speaking or coughing the other night, or I might have sneezed, but I lacked the moral courage. I felt unwell and had a sick headache, and without saying anything to anyone I went to bed immediately after dinner. I may have been in bed half an hour and had dozed off when I was roused by seeing a light. I opened my eyes and observed Essie at the dressing-table. She had come into the room, not dreaming I was there, and she was trying on Salome's bonnets, I suppose the best, putting her head on this side, then on that, and studying the effect at the glass. I did not cough or sneeze, as I ought. I allowed her to leave the room in ignorance that she had been seen. I cannot remember now whether she went off with the bonnet on her head, or whether she replaced it. I did not announce my presence, because I was in bed, and I thought that my situation was even less dignified than hers. But I see, now, I ought to have coughed or sneezed.'

'Philip, we shall get into an awful muddle unless Salome returns.'

Philip said nothing.

'Now look here,' continued Jeremiah. 'I have heard that you have been looking out for lodgings. If you are going to live by yourself, that is tolerable; but if you choose to have your wife with you, you can live here and manage the factory and the house for me. I am tired of the drudgery of business, and I cannot, and will not, be worried to death by servants. I must have someone who will look after the factory for me, and someone who will attend to the house.'

'It would be best for Salome to return, but I am not sure that she is willing. She seems to be enjoying herself vastly.'

'Go after her; surprise her. Take the baby. Spend a month there and then return. Bring Janet back as well, if she cares to come.'

'Perhaps that will be best,' mused Philip. 'Things have become very uncomfortable without her—only one pocket-handkerchief, and my socks only get to be taken as floor-cloths.'

'Of course it is best. As soon as possible go, and don't return without her.'

CHAPTER XLI.

ONE POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF.

PHILIP PENNYCOMEQUICK was on his way to Andermatt. He had come to an understanding with Uncle Jeremiah. His comfort, his well-being for the future depended on Salome. The old man had taken a fancy to spend his winters abroad, and he had no wish to remain tied to his business in smoky Mergatroyd. He was quite ready to make it over to Philip, but then Philip must first be reconciled to his wife, and bring her home to hold rule over the house. A Swiss nurse had been found ready to take the child and accompany Philip to Andermatt.

Philip did not travel in the same carriage as the nurse and child, but he saw to their lacking nothing. He occupied a compartment of a first-class carriage by himself, and thought a good deal about himself and his wife. And—first—it was particularly annoying to have only one pocket-handkerchief. The strictest inquiries had been made, but not more than the one in use could be discovered. The washerwoman insisted

that she had received none, and the housemaid protested that she had given a dozen. Between the two they had disappeared, and Philip was obliged to purchase a half-dozen fresh silk ones; he would not buy more because he was resolved to get, with his wife's aid, at the bottom of the mystery, and recover the lost pocket-handkerchiefs, wherever they were. Unfortunately he was not aware how many he had had originally; but Salome knew—she had taken count of all his clothing, knew the number of his socks and also of his pocket-handkerchiefs. There was some excuse for the havoc wrought among the former, for the friction of boot heels and soles does destroy the texture of worsted socks, but no rubbing of noses injures the grain of silk pocket-handkerchiefs.

'I know,' said Philip, as the train drew up at Thionville, 'I know that when one has a cold, the secretion is acrid, but it is not sulphuric acid to burn holes in pocket-handkerchiefs. What? Turn out here, and have one's boxes examined? I will come to the bottom of that disappearance of pocket-handkerchiefs. I am put to intolerable discomfort. I hate wiping my nose with silk till it has been washed three or four times and become flexible, and has lost its harshness—it irritates the mucous membrane. I am going through, *voyez mon billet!* What nonsense examining one's baggage here! Salome will know how many handkerchiefs I had. I am glad I am going to Andermatt; it will set my mind at rest, and I can have these hateful new handkerchiefs washed there.'

But other matters occupied Philip's mind. He had his wife's letters—the last two—in his pocket, and he re-read them; the jolting of the train, the flicker of the light in the lamp overhead, made the reading difficult, and predisposed him to take umbrage at her expressions. What especially annoyed him was her praise of her new friend, the American lady, and it gave him

satisfaction to conjure up before his imagination the scene of introduction of himself to her, and to picture himself, with frigid courtesy looking at her, raising his hat, stiffly bowing, and with cold words giving her to understand that her friendship with his wife was against his wishes, and must be discontinued. The places at *table d'hôte*, he supposed, were arranged according to priority. He would inform the waiter that as he came last, all his belongings, his wife, his sister-in-law, and her nieces must relinquish their seats and come down to the end of the table by him—that would separate his party from the ambiguous stranger. If, after dinner, she came to speak to his wife, he would offer Salome his arm and ask her to come a stroll alone with him.

There were many ways in which this person might be given to understand that she was no longer desired as an associate. A feeble sense of pity for her in her confusion at being shaken off stirred in his heart, and then died away.

He had not written to announce his intention of coming with the baby to Andermatt. He intended to surprise Salome. There would be something flattering to himself in the change of colour, the delight that would spring up in her eyes, the cry of recognition—then the humble hesitation, awaiting his permission to spring into his arms.

Throughout the journey Philip maintained his connection with the baby, though keeping it at a distance, as the sun holds the earth and swings it round it, but never allows the earth to approach it too closely. And as the moon revolves about the earth, so did the Swiss nurse dance attendance on Philip the Little, rotating also, of course, about Philip the Great.

On board the steamer, on the lake, Philip saw a gentleman in light suit, with helmet cap, surrounded by a puggaree, who attached himself to several groups of tourists, and showed them his blackened watch, or

discoursed on the great evangelist of Italy, Signor Count Caprili; or on his scheme for rearing Mount St. Bernard dogs. He at once recognised the man, and he caught the fellow's eye on him; but Beaple Yeo made no attempt to renew acquaintance till Philip was in a carriage to make the ascent from Amsteg by the Devil's Bridge to Andermatt, when he jumped into the same vehicle, and held out his hand with a boisterous jollity.

'How d'ye do—do, Pennycomequick? Delighted to see you. Will find my daughter right and flourishing at the Hôtel Impérial. Of course, you go there. I was nearly killed at all of the others. Look at my silver watch-case—turned black with sulphuretted hydrogen. But, of course, you go where Sal is. Good girl! excellent girl! You made a first-rate choice when you took her, and you have my blessing. Mercy on me, that is my grandchild, I presume. To think of it—I a grandfather! If you will do me a favour, my boy, you will say nothing about our relationship. I don't want to be looked upon as a grandpa. Bless me! at my time of life a grandpa! I'll share the carriage with you—pay a third—no a quarter, as you are three, self, nurse, and baby.'

Philip became stiff and cold. He would not take the hand offered him, nor say a word to the man who had so unceremoniously entered his carriage. Beaple Yeo, alias Schofield, was by no means disconcerted.

'You will take my card,' he said. Then, when he saw that Philip would not do so: 'But no, I will introduce you myself, dear son-in-law, to the proprietor. Now do look at this zig-zag road. I remember seeing a marionette theatre when I was a child, and this scene was represented. A number of little carriages came running down the zig-zag one after another—and here it is—the same exactly. It is worth your looking. One, two, three—upon my word there are

five carriages; and see how the horses tear along and swing round the corners. It is worth looking at.'

There are certain insects which, when handled, become rigid and take all the appearance of sticks. It was the same with Philip; the presence, the address of this odious man reduced or transmuted him into a bit of stick. He sat motionless with his umbrella between his knees, his hands resting on the handle, his neck stiff, and his eyes staring at a couple of buttons of unequal nature at the back of the driver's jacket. He did not look at Beaple Yeo, nor at the zig-zags, nor at the descending train of five carriages, nor at the wondrous scenery. He was greatly incensed. It was intolerable that he should meet this man again, and that he should be near, if not with Salome. But this was one of the annoyances he must look on as inevitable, one that would continually recur. Really it was too bad of Salome not to have mentioned in one of her letters that her father was at Andermatt. If she had done that not 'all the king's horses, nor all the king's men,' would have got Philip to make that expedition to Andermatt. Finding that his son-in-law was indisposed to converse, the cheerful and loquacious colonel addressed the baby, screwed up his mouth, made noises, offered his eyeglass to the infant, but withdrew it when the child attempted to suck it. From the baby; Yeo glided into remarks addressed to the nurse, asked her how long she had been on the road, whether she was French or Swiss, what was the name of her home, how she liked England, etc., regardless of the frowns of Philip, who at length, to draw off his father-in-law from this unsuitable conversation, said sternly:

'Pray how long have you been at Andermatt?'

'Oh! several weeks. I was there before my Sal arrived. I have no doubt Janet wrote and told her I was there, and filial duty—filial duty—one of the most beautiful and blessed of the qualities locked in the

human breast—in the human breast—drew her to Andermatt to make a fuller, freer acquaintance with the author of her being than was possible in England —in England.'

When the carriage had passed the Devil's Bridge and the little chapel at the mouth of the ravine, where the broad basin of fertile pasture opens out, in which stands the village of Andermatt, a party of ladies and one gentleman was visible on the road, two in deep mourning, two in colours, and three girls in half-mourning.

'Ha!' exclaimed the colonel, 'my family.'

Philip looked intently at the party. He at once recognised Salome, and was satisfied that the other in black was Janet. To his great surprise he saw Mrs. Sidebottom and the captain. Who that slender lady was in a light dress he could only conjecture. If he had not been in the carriage with Beaple Yeo, he would have told the driver to stop, and allow him to descend and greet his wife; but the presence at his side of that man determined him to postpone the meeting. He did not wish Salome to see him riding beside her father, as though he had made up his quarrel with him.

He drew back in his place, and looked another way whilst driving past, and Salome, who had caught sight of the well-known waving puggaree, lowered her eyes. Beaple Yeo had his hat off, and was wafting a salutation to the American lady.

Then, when passed, he turned to Philip and said, 'You will do me the favour, I know, not to announce your relationship; 'pon my word, I don't want to be looked upon as a grandfather, because I don't feel it. Young blood tingles in my veins.'

The strange lady had stepped aside for the carriage to pass, upon the bank near that side on which Philip sat, and he looked at her as he drove by, looked at her with a feeling of aversion. It was too annoying of Salome to walk out with this questionable individual

and meet him as he arrived, thrusting her almost into his face.

On reaching the Hôtel Impérial he had to undergo the annoyance of being taken in hand, patronized and presented by Beaple Yeo. Philip was a bad French scholar, spoke no German, and the English of the proprietor was not understandable till one got used to it.

Philip asked for his room, and said to himself, 'There will be time for me to wash my hands and change my shirt; the collars are limp—not enough stiffening put in them, they will not stand up. *Ici! voyez!*' to the maid. 'Is there a *boulanger*—no, I mean a *blanchisseuse* in this place? Wait till my portmanteau is open. I want to have five pocket-handkerchiefs sent at once to the wash. *Ici! voyez!* soft water, *et point de soda et* washing-powder.'

When he had delivered over the pocket-handkerchiefs and had assumed a clean shirt, and brushed his hair, and washed his face and hands, he descended to the *salle*, and asked if the ladies had returned from their walk.

'Note yet, saïre,' answered the porter.

'How long before they do come back?'

'I sure I can note tell. Bote too shupper sure.'

'Very well,' said Philip, 'go and send for the nurse and the child. They must be ready. It will be,' said he to himself, 'a pleasure to me after the first rapture is over, to show Salome that I have brought her the child.'

When the nurse came in Philip ordered her to sit with the baby in the veranda before the hotel; the air was fresh, but dry and delicious, and the child could take no harm. Then he ordered for himself some claret and iced soda-water.

It was inconsiderate of Salome keeping him waiting. He was anxious to see her, notwithstanding the provocation given him. Why should she not have

been there instead of going out for a walk? No doubt she and her party had strolled to the Devil's Bridge.

'Waiter,' called Philip. 'Which is the table at which the ladies sit?'

When told, he said, 'I suppose there are seven covers?'

'Eight, saire; de American leddy sits dere.'

'Eight; very well, waiter. I sit with them in future, and the American lady goes to another table. Do you understand? There is no place for her at the table where I sit.'

Presently Philip heard the clear, pleasant voices of the girls and the ladies outside, and their feet on the gravel. He started up and hastened down the hall; but before he could reach the door he heard Salome's voice, partly raised in cry as of pain, partly in extremity of joy.

'It is! It is! It can be no other! It is my baby!'

How did she know it? To the male eye there is scarcely any distinction between babies; as one lamb is like another lamb, and one buttercup like another buttercup, so are all babies alike. Some have dark hair, others are blondes; but so among lambs. And there are varieties of species in buttercups; in the Alpine pastures some are silver. Unwarned, unprepared, Salome knew her baby; knew it at once, with a leap of her heart and a rush of blood that roared in her ears and for a moment dazzled her eyes. She asked no questions how it came there, she entertained no doubt whether it was her own, her very own—in a moment she had the little creature in her arms, laughing, crying, covering its face and hands with kisses; and the child also knew its mother, had no wonder how she came to be there, no doubt whether it were really she; it thrust forth its little pats, and held Salome by the copper-gold hair, and put its rosy mouth to her cheek.

'Salome!' exclaimed Janet, 'how can you be so ridiculous? This must be some other child; who could have brought yours here?'

Then Philip appeared in the doorway—but Salome's eyes were blind with tears of joy, and she did not see him; she could see nothing but her child. He spoke —she did not hear him; she could hear nothing but the cooing of her babe.

Philip stood beside her and touched her on the shoulder.

'Do you not know me?' he asked. 'Are you not glad to see me?'

Salome stood still and released her child. She was confused; she hardly knew whether she were awake or in the most beautiful, blissful of dreams.

'Well—this is hardly the—the—Salome. Do you not know me?'

'Oh, Philip!' she gasped, 'is it really you? And you have brought me my baby! Oh! how good, how kind!' and she fell to kissing and hugging her baby again.

Then Philip, finding himself put completely in the background, condemned to a subsidiary part to that played by Philip the Little, was offended, and said with a slight tone of acerbity: 'My dear Salome, be decorous. Give up Phil now to the nurse, a Swiss young person, and come, take my arm.'

'Philip,' said Salome, 'Oh, Philip, how good! how very dear of you!'

He felt her heart beating wildly against his arm, as she clung to him, at his side. Then she began to sob. 'It is too great happiness. My darling! My darling pet! and looking so well too.'

'You mean the baby?'

'Yes, of course, Philip.'

She put her hand in her pocket, drew out her 'kerchief and wiped her eyes.

'By the way,' said Philip, 'how many had I?'

'How many what, Philip? Only this one, darling.'

'I mean pocket-handkerchiefs. All, all have disappeared, and I have been condemned to one. I have come here to Andermatt expressly to know what my stock consisted of. Conceive, only one pocket-handkerchief left!'

CHAPTER XLII.

THE GAUNTLET DANGLED.

PHILIP had to shake hands with Janet, with his aunt, with the three Labartes, to whom he was introduced, and with a little heartiness to clasp the hand of the captain. He was introduced, moreover, to the American lady, and was thus given the well-considered opportunity of saluting her with calculated indifference. He somewhat exaggerated the cordiality of his greeting of the Labarte girls so as to emphasize the chilliness of his behaviour towards the young lady from Chicago.

When the first excitement of meeting was past, Philip was overwhelmed with questions. 'How was dear Uncle Jeremiah?—was he much altered?' 'What was going to be done about the mill?' and 'What a puzzle it would be about the administration?' 'Could he re-establish himself legally as alive after he had been decreed dead?' 'What had happened at Mergatroyd besides the return of Uncle Jeremiah?' 'How had the people received him?' 'Had they erected a triumphal arch?' 'Did he write beforehand to say he was coming?' 'What sort of weather had they had in England?' 'What kind of crossing had Philip?' 'Had baby suffered at all from the sea?' 'What did he think of the railway?'

There was no end to the questions asked, which

Philip answered as well as he could. And as he received and replied to the questions he kept his eye on the strange lady, and considered how she must feel—shut out from all the interests which engrossed those connected with him; and how much in the way she ought to regard herself.

This she did observe, and drew aside, out of hearing, and as Beaple Yeo came forward, fell into conversation with him. His presence had an immediate numbing effect on Philip and Salome and Janet. They withdrew to another end of the *salon*.

Philip had used his opportunity to observe the strange lady, and he admitted to himself that she was good-looking.

Of course there are differences in types of beauty, and she was not of the type that commended itself to Philip—so he thought. She had dark hair and a transparent olive complexion. Possibly a touch of dark blood in her, mused Philip, and he said to himself:

'I will take the first opportunity to look at her nails.'

Her features were finely modelled, with a firmness of cutting that showed she was no longer in her teens, undeveloped. The flexible transparent nostrils, the slightly-curled curves of the lips, the wavy hair over the brow—whether natural, the result of a trace of black blood, or artificially produced—the splendid dark eyes that looked at Philip, looked down into him and flashed through his whole being like a lamp shining into a cellar—the delicate ears, the beautiful neck, not too long, set on well-formed shoulders—all were observed by Philip.

'Yes,' said Philip, 'she is handsome, but she belongs to that period of life which may be twenty-four or thirty-four. She has got out of thirteen-hood, that is clear.'

He looked at Salome. If Salome was his ideal,

nothing could be more different than her type from the type of Miss Durham. There was a childlike simplicity in Salome, an ignorance of the world which would make of her a child to gray hairs; and this strange lady had clearly none of this simplicity and ignorance; she knew a great deal about the ways and varieties of life. One like Miss Durham would never go into gushing ecstasy over a baby, and forget that the first homage was due to her husband.

It afforded emphatic pleasure to Philip to be able to demonstrate before this single lady, with such a circle of relatives about him—six ladies and one gentleman—we are eight and you are one. It was Joseph's sheaf with all the sheaves bowing down before it; it was like a man with a pedigree describing the family tree to a self-made man. It was like a hen with a brood of chickens clucking and strutting before a fowl that has never reared a solitary chick, hardly laid an egg; it was like a millionaire showing his pictures, his plate, his equipages, his yacht, to an acquaintance who had two hundred a year.

It has just been stated that the American girl's eyes had flashed down into Philip's, and irradiated his interior as a lantern does a cellar—a wine-cellar, of course—and the light revealed magnificent cobwebs, thick dust, and some spiders. There was, unquestionably, in Philip much rare good wine, excellent qualities of heart and soul, but they were none of them on tap, all were bottled, and all overlaid with whitewash and dust, and matted with the fibres and folds of prejudice. These masses of cobweb, these layers of dust, these fat spiders were objects of pride to Philip. Every year the cobwebs gathered density, and the dust accumulated, and the spiders became more gross, hideous, and venomous; the wine remained corked, it was merely an excuse for the cultivation of cobwebs and spiders. We are all eager to show our friends through these rich wine-vaults of our hearts. We light candles and

conduct them down with infinite pride, and what we expose is only our curtains of prejudice of ancient standing and long formation, our meannesses, and our spites. If we offer them to taste of our best wine, it is but through straws.

On the other hand, there was Colonel Yeo, a walking Bodega of generous sentiment, with every rich passion and ripe opinion always on tap—ask what you would, and you had a tumblerful. But we libel Bodega, the gush with which he regaled his acquaintance was not true vintage; it was squeezed raisins and logwood, gooseberry and elder—no cobwebs of prejudice there, not a trace even of a scruple, not a token of maturity.

Supper was hurried on, because Philip was hungry, half an hour before the usual time at which the little party sat down to their special table in the alcove.

'Oh!' said Salome, 'there is a cover short. Waiter, we shall be nine to-night and in future, not eight. My husband is here.'

'Pardon,' answered the waiter, 'monsieur expressly said eight.'

'Oh, he forgot. He did not understand. We are now nine.'

Then Philip interfered.

'I said eight, but if you particularly desire Miss Durham's society, I can sit at the long table with the common guests.'

'Oh, Philip! surely, surely not!' exclaimed Salome. 'It will hurt her feelings.'

'She will understand that we are a family party, and that from such a party strangers are best excluded.'

Salome heaved a sigh. She could not endure the thought of giving pain to anyone.

'Who is she?' asked Philip.

'She is a lady, and very agreeable. Indeed, a

most superior person. You will be certain to like her, when you come to know her. Oh, Philip! she knows a thousand things about which I am ignorant.'

'I have no doubt about that,' answered Philip ironically; 'and things I would be sorry you should know about. I make no question she has seen the shady side of life.'

'But she is tremendously rich.'

'Who says so?'

'The waiter—of course, he knows. And Colonel Yeo pays her great attention accordingly. Oh, Philip! I wish so much you would extend your protection to her against him. He may draw her into one of his schemes for the advancement of missionaries or the propagation of dogs—and get a lot of money out of her. Do—do, Philip, protect her against him. I—I—I don't like to speak about him. You can understand that, Philip.'

'Very well,' said he; 'I will do what I can.' He was flattered at the idea of acting as protector to this young American lady. 'But I put down my foot and say she is not to sit at our table.'

The party gathered in the alcove, and fortunately Miss Durham was the last to arrive, so there was no difficulty about requesting her to take a place elsewhere. When she entered the *salle-à-manger* at the usual hour, every seat was occupied at the table to which for some little while she had been admitted. She saw at a glance that her place was taken, and she went without demur, or a look of disappointment, to the long table. She had sufficient tact to perceive that Philip disliked her, and she had no intention of pressing her society on those who did not desire it. So far from seeming vexed, a slight contemptuous smile, like the flicker of summer lightning, played about her lips. She caught Salome's eye, full of appeal and apology, and returned it with a good-

natured nod. 'A trifle such as this,' said the nod, 'will not give me offence.'

Mrs. Sidebottom sat beside Philip, and plied him with questions relative to the intentions of Uncle Jeremiah—questions which he was unable to answer; but she attributed his evasive replies to unwillingness to speak, and pressed him the more urgently. The captain was attentive to Janet, who had recovered her spirits, laughed and twinkled, and without intentionally coquetting, did coquet with him. Janet became dull in female society, but that of men acted as a tonic upon her; it was like Parrish's Chemical Food to a bloodless girl; it brisked her up, gave colour to her cheek, and set her tongue wagging. The captain was good-natured, and he threw a word or two to the Labarte girls, but devoted his chief attention to Janet.

Salome was left to herself, Mrs. Sidebottom engrossed her nephew, whether he would or not, and when he said something to Salome, he was interrupted by Mrs. Sidebottom, who exclaimed:

'Now, fiddle-de-dee, you will have plenty of time to talk in private to your wife, whereas I shall see you only occasionally, and I am particularly interested in all you can tell me of Jeremiah. Give me your candid opinion; what will he do? Is he angry with me?'

'I can give no opinion without grounds on which to base it, and Uncle Jeremiah has not taken me into his confidence.'

'I see you have the reserve of a lawyer. I had enough of that when Sidebottom was alive. I hate reserve. Give me frankness. Now—if you will not tell me what you know of my brother's intentions——'

'I know nothing, and can therefore divulge nothing.'

'You won't tell, that is the truth. Don't tell me you have been a fortnight and more under the same roof with him and have not found out his intentions!

Well—to change the subject—what do you think of the scheme for buying up the hospice on the St. Gothard and turning it into an establishment for Mount St. Bernard dogs?'

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE GAUNTLET CAST.

WHEN supper was ended, the whole party adjourned to the promenade outside the hotel, where a fountain plashed in a basin, and in an aviary on a perch stood a scowling, draggled eagle, and beside the aviary were cages with marmots, smelling abominably, and fettered on a patch of grass was a miserable chamois that seemed to have the mange.

It was delightful to walk in the crisp pure air of evening without cap or bonnet, and watch the evening glow on the snow-fields, and listen to the tinkle of the bells as the cows were driven home from the Alpine pastures and diverged to their several stables from the main street. Beaple Yeo came out after the party of Philip's table, not hatless, and his puggaree in the dusk fluttered like a gigantic white moth. The chaplain for the summer from England was also walking in the grounds with his newly-married wife: a feeble youth with a high-pitched voice and a cackling laugh, who had cultivated a military moustache, to point out his imbecility, as the ass in the fable assumed a lion's skin, but was revealed as an ass on opening his mouth. A party of Germans was feeding and talking vociferously. A couple of Alpine Clubmen in knickerbockers, carrying their alpenstocks proudly, trudged in with a guide, the latter laden with their knapsacks.

Salome had been walking, nestled against Philip's side, not saying much, but feeling happy, when her attention was attracted by the wailing of a babe from one of the hotel windows.

'Philip, dear!' she said, 'there is my pet, my darling crying. I must tear myself away from you and go to him. I know he wants me. He is so clever. He is quite aware that I am here, and resents being rocked to sleep by the Swiss nurse; he is protesting that nothing will make him close his peepers but mamma's voice, and a kiss. And—oh, dear, dear Philip! I don't like to think it possible you can be unkind to anyone—there is Miss Durham behind us, all by herself; do—do say a word to her and be civil. It was rather—well, not quite rude, but strange of us paying no attention to her at supper, and turning her out of her place. Philip, I could not eat my supper, I was so uncomfortable. I would not hurt anyone's feelings willingly, and I am sure Miss Durham has not been treated with consideration; would you—because I ask you—for my sake, speak to her when I am gone to baby?'

She looked up entreatingly in his eyes, loosed her hand from his arm, and was gone.

Philip slackened his pace, then halted, to allow the American lady to catch him up. He would speak to her, and give her to understand, of course politely, that intimacy with his wife must cease. When she came level with him he raised his hat, and said, 'A beautiful evening; a charming evening.'

'So I have already perceived, Mr. Pennycome-quick.'

'What a surprise this green basin of valley is to one emerging from the ravine of the Reuss!' said Philip.

'Yes,' with indifference; then, with animation, 'By the way, you were in the carriage with Colonel Yeo.'

'I beg pardon, he was in the carriage with me.'

'I suppose you are old friends?' said the lady.

Philip stiffened his back. 'Miss Durham, we belong to distinct classes of society. With his I have nothing in common.'

'But you knew each other?'

'I knew of him. I cannot say I knew him.'

'Have you no ambition to rise to his social grade?'

'To—rise—to—his—social grade!' It took Philip some time to digest this question. He replied ironically, 'None in the least, I do assure you. I am thankful to say I belong to that middle class which works for its living honourably, diligently, and finds its pleasure and its pride in industry.'

'And Colonel Yeo?'

'Oh! I assure you he does not soil his fingers with honest trade or business.'

'You do not want to know him?'

'I have not the smallest ambition.'

After a pause, during which neither spoke, Philip resumed. 'There are subjects that are distasteful to me; this is one.'

'I see,' said Miss Durham, 'you are a Radical.'

'We will let the subject drop,' said Philip. 'This air is delightful to me after the smoke of a Yorkshire manufacturing district.'

'It is really surprising how fresh, notwithstanding, your wife is,' answered the Chicago lady.

Philip turned sharply round and looked at her. 'Fresh!' he repeated. He did not understand what her meaning was—fresh in complexion, or that her character was green and raw.

'Her freshness is quite delightful,' added the lady.

Then Philip's anger broke loose. He was offended at any remark being made on Salome by a person of whom he knew nothing.

'Indeed—perhaps so. And it is precisely this freshness, this generosity of mind, this ignorance of the world, which leads her to extend the hand of fellowship to—to anyone—to those who may not be as fresh as herself—who may be quite the reverse.'

Miss Durham stood still, her face gleamed with anger.

'I know, sir, very well what you mean. You know

that I am alone, without a man—a father, brother or husband by to protect me from insult, and you take this advantage to address me thus.'

She revolved on her heel and walked hastily back to the hotel. Philip stood rooted to the spot.

What had he done? What shadow of a right had he to address an inoffensive girl with such impertinence? A girl who had done him no harm, and of whom he knew nothing, and who, for aught he knew to the contrary, might be as respectable, high-minded, and well-connected as the best lady in America. She had been alone in this foreign corner, shut out from social intercourse with her fellow-countrymen, and she had formed an acquaintance with his wife, his wife's sister, and the Labarte-girls. What right had he to step in and thrust her out of association with them?

He had done what he determined, but done it in so clumsy a manner as to put himself in the wrong, make himself who stood on punctilio appear an unlicked bear. He had behaved to an unprotected, young, and beautiful girl in a manner that would have disgraced the rudest artisan, in a manner that he knew not one of his honest Yorkshire workmen in his factory would have dared to behave.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AND PICKED UP.

MATTERS that look serious at night shrink to trifling significance in the morning. Philip rose refreshed by sleep, with a buoyancy of heart he had not experienced for many months, and a resolution to enjoy his holiday now that he was taking one. How often had he longed for the chance of making an excursion on the Continent, of seeing the snowy ranges of the Alps and studying fresh aspects of human life! Now the opportunity had come, and he must make the most of it.

His prospects at home were not such as to discourage him; he was no longer the ruling manager of the Pennycomequick firm, but he was not going to be kicked out of the concern as he had at first feared. Uncle Jeremiah purposed to take him into partnership, make him working partner, and in all probability he would be better off than with Mrs. Sidebottom, consuming more than half the profits and contributing nothing.

He had been tired with his journey yesterday, irritated at finding Beaple Yeo in his proximity, and he had given way to his irritation and spoken uncourteously to an American lady. What of that? Who was she to take offence at what he said? If she were angered she must swallow her wrath. She had vexed him by pushing herself into the acquaintance of his wife. If people will climb over hedges they must expect scratches. If requisite he could apologize, and the thing was over. Miss Durham had made a remark which he considered a slight passed on his wife, and he was right to resent it. If she had made a thrust with an unguarded foil, it was not likely that he would retaliate with the end of his, blunted by a button.

He came downstairs, feeling cheerful and on the best of terms with the world. He would go for a walk that day with Salome—to the Ober-Alp, and pick gentians and Alpen-rose; and in preparation for the walk, he went to the collection of carved work, photographs, and Alpine paraphernalia exhibited in the *salle-à-manger* by the head waiter for sale, and bought himself a stout walking-stick with an artificial chamois-horn as handle. Then he strolled out into the village-street, and looked in at the shop-windows. There was only one shop that interested him; it contained crystals smoked and clear, and specimens of the rocks on the St. Gothard Pass, collections of dried flowers and photographs.

When he returned to the inn he found that his

party was in the *salle* awaiting him. The usual massive white coffee-cups, heap of rolls, all crust outside and bubbles within, wafers of butter, and artificial honey were on table.

A German lady was prowling about the room with her head so tumbled that it was hard to believe she had dressed her hair since leaving her bed, and the curate was there also, ambling round his bride and squeaking forth entreaties that she would allow him to order her eggs for breakfast. Philip was heartily glad that he sat along with his party at one table, in the alcove. Miss Durham was not there.

On inquiry Salome learned that she had ordered breakfast to be taken to her room.

'So much the better,' said Philip.

'My dear, surely you made friends yesterday evening after I left you.'

'Come—to table,' said Philip; and then—'on the contrary, I don't know quite how it came about, but something I said gave her umbrage, and she flew away in a rage. I suppose I offended her. It does not matter. Pass me the butter.'

'It does not matter! Oh, Philip!'

'Given Miss Durham offence!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'But—she is worth thousands. How could you be so indiscreet?'

'She is so charming,' said Janet.

'So amiable,' murmured Claudine Labarte.

'*Mais, quelle gaucherie!*' whispered the penultimate Labarte to the youngest sister.

Then ensued a silence. Philip looked from one to another. Already a cloud had come into his clear sky.

Philip said sternly, 'Pass me the butter.'

Those who seemed least concerned were the captain and Janet, who sat together and were engrossed in little jokes that passed between them, and were not heard or regarded by the rest of the company.

'This is very unfortunate,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'for we had made a plan to go to the hospice together, and she would have paid her share of the carriage.'

Salome looked into her plate; her colour came and went. She slid her hand into that of her husband, and whispered, 'I did not mean to reproach you. I am sure you were right.'

'I was right,' answered Philip; 'something she said appeared to me a reflection on you and I fired up. I am your husband, and am bound to do so.'

'I am quite sure, then, you misunderstood her,' said Salome; 'dear Miss Durham could not—no, I do not mean that—would not say a word against me. Of course I know I have plenty of faults, and she cannot have failed to observe them; but she would not dream of alluding to them, least of all to you.'

'That is possible,' answered Philip. 'And I will say or do something to pass it off. But, I hope you see that I did the correct thing in taking your part, even if no slight was intended.'

'Of course, Philip.'

Then Salome stood up and said, 'I will go to her. I will tell her there was a misunderstanding. It will come best from me, as I was the occasion.'

Philip nodded. It was certainly best that Salome should do this, and save him the annoyance and—well, yes, the humiliation of an apology.

When Salome was gone, Philip spoke to the eldest Labarte girl, but found her uninteresting; and the younger sisters looked at him with ill-concealed dissatisfaction. He had come to Andermatt and spoiled their party. They had been cheerful and united before. Miss Durham had been infinitely amusing, and now Philip had introduced discord, was wooden and weariful. They wished he had remained at home in smoky, foggy England; if he came—he should have left the fog and chill behind him, instead of

diffusing it over a contented and merry party. Mrs. Sidebottom had left the table to haggle with the head waiter over a paper-cutter with a chamois leg as handle, that she wanted to buy and send as a present to Jeremiah, but was indisposed to pay for it the price asked by the waiter.

'But, madam,' said the waiter, 'if you do not take him at de price, Mademoiselle Durham vill; she have admired and wanted to buy him, and she goes away to-day.'

'Miss Durham going!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, and rushed back to the table to announce the news. 'Why—who will go halves with us in vehicles! This is your doing, Philip. You have offended her, and are driving her away.'

The announcement produced silence; and all eyes were turned on Philip, those of the Labarte girls with undisguised indignation. Even the captain and Janet ceased their conversation. An angel may have passed through the room, but he must have been a crippled one, so long did he take in traversing it; nor can he have been a good one, so little light and cheerfulness did he diffuse.

'Well!' said Philip, 'what if she be going? That is no concern of ours.'

Then he stood up and left the room. He was in an unamiable mood. This party did not show him the consideration that was due to him; and found fault with him about trifles. He left the hotel, and wandered to the aviary, where he remained contemplating the scowling eagle. The bird perhaps recognised a similarity of mood in his visitor, for he turned his head, ruffled his feathers, and looked at Philip.

'Well,' said Philip, 'that is the king of the birds, is it? To my mind a bumptious, ill-conditioned, dissatisfied, and uninteresting fowl.'

Then he moved in front of the marmot cage. 'And these are marmots, that spend more than half

their life in sleep. Very like Lambert Sidebottom or Pennycomequick, as he is pleased to call himself now.'

He looked at the eagle again. 'Pshaw! Pluck him of his self-consciousness as Aquila—and what is he? What is he?'

Then he wandered away among the flower-beds and bushes of syringa without a purpose, grumbling to himself at the manners of those Labartes, and the figures that Lambert and Janet made, laughing over inane jokes, and regretting that he had allowed Salome to go in search of the Chicago lady.

Salome in the meantime had hastened to her friend's room, the number of which she knew, and found her packing her portmanteau and dress-boxes. The room was strewn with dresses.

'But,' exclaimed Salome on entering, 'what is the meaning of this? Miss Durham! You are surely not going to leave?'

'Certainly I am,' answered the American lady. 'I have been insulted here, and shall leave the place for one where there are better manners.'

'Oh, don't go. My husband did not mean to offend you. I do not know what he said, but I am quite sure he would do nothing ungentlemanly, unkind. He has had a long journey, and this and other matters had just put him in a condition of nervous excitement. If you wish it he will explain, but surely you will take my word that no impertinence was intended.'

Miss Durham looked at Salome steadily.

'The word has been said.'

'But,' pleaded Salome, 'my husband will unsay it. I entreat you forget and forgive.'

'I cannot. It is not in my nature.'

'Not forgive? Oh, Miss Durham, half the sweetness and happiness of life is made up of forgiveness.'

'Tastes differ,' said the American, and stooped to her work again.

Salome went to her and arrested her hands. 'I will not, I cannot allow you to go. I should ever feel an ache in my heart to think that you had gone away without reconciliation.' Half laughing, half crying, she added: 'I thought that if it could possibly be that you and my husband should meet, you would become close friends—but I never supposed he would come out here to me—I mean I did not think he could leave his business. And now that he is here, instead of making friends with you, a quarrel is picked and you are almost enemies.'

'Quite,' said Miss Durham coolly.

'Not so with him. If he knew how to obtain your forgiveness he would do that thing. Is there no way in which you can be satisfied?'

'Oh yes, by obtaining satisfaction.'

Salome looked at her. The handsome face was much altered, there was a bitterness and scorn in it she had never seen before. The dark eyebrows were drawn together, forming a sombre, threatening bar across her face above her splendid eyes.

'When a man has offended another, he that is injured calls out the offender, and there is an exchange of pistol-shots. Had I here anyone who belonged to me, anyone to stand by me and defend my character, I would send him with a challenge to your husband, and they would fight the matter out on the green sward by the chapel, or better,' she laughed, 'on the Devil's Bridge. But as I have neither father, nor brother, nor husband, I must fight for my own honour, or——'

'Or what, Miss Durham?'

'Or run away.'

Both were silent; presently Salome laughed a little nervously, and said:

'But you never fight? no woman fights.'

'Does she not?'

'Not with pistols.'

'Perhaps not.'

'Nor with swords.'

'Oh no.'

'Then—with what?'

'With her proper weapons.'

'You may be quite sure my husband would throw down his arms and yield at discretion.'

'I have little doubt.'

Salome closed the box on which Miss Durham had been engaged, and seated herself upon it. Then she looked up with childlike entreaty into her friend's face, and said:

'I will not allow you to go. We had schemed to have such pleasant excursions together. We have been so happy since we have known each other, and ——I have not yet had the delight of showing you my baby—my best treasure.'

'You will not let me run away?'

'No, no! You will forget this little affair; it was nothing. Come and be with us again. My husband is a great reader, and knows a great deal about things of which I am ignorant, and you have travelled and seen so much that your society will interest him immensely. Oh, do stay, do not go away.'

The American girl went to the window, leaned both her arms folded on it, and looked out. She could see into the garden, and she observed Philip there, standing before the eagle's cage. He had a little twig in his hand, and he was thrusting it between the bars at the bird. She turned and said to Salome:

'No—I will go. There are several reasons which urge me to go. The insult which I received from your husband for one—and already he had allowed me to see that he disliked and despised me——'

'No, indeed,' interrupted Salome. 'I had written to him in all my letters about you, and—perhaps he was a little jealous of you.'

'Jealous of *me*?'

'It is a fancy of mine.'

Salome lowered her eyes.

'Oh, you fresh, you green dear!' laughed Miss Durham. 'Do you know what jealousy is?'

'By experience? No.'

'Come,' said the American girl, seating herself beside her on the same box, still with folded arms, resting now on her lap. 'Come! Supposing that I, instead of being hated and despised by your husband, were admired and loved by him. Would you not be madly jealous then?'

Salome looked round at her without flinching.

'Admire you he might, but love you——'

'More than he loved *you*.'

'He could not do it.'

The girl burst into a mocking laugh.

'What, you also hold me cheap, think there is nothing in me beside you—beside you—to love?'

'On the contrary,' answered Salome, crimsoning to the roots of her hair, 'I am nothing, nothing at all; ignorant, foolish, fresh, and green, as you say—and you are so beautiful, so clever, so experienced. I am nothing whatever in comparison with you, but then Philip, I mean my husband, you know *could* not love you more than me, because I am his wife.'

'Oh!' There was a depth of mockery in the tone.

Then up stood Miss Durham again, and as Salome also rose, the stranger seized her by the shoulders, and held her at arm's length from her, and said:

'Shall I go, or shall I stay? Shall I run away, or——'

'You shall not run away. I will clasp you in my arms and stay you,' exclaimed Salome, and suited the action to the word.

Miss Durham loosed herself from her almost roughly.

'It were better for both that I should go.'

Again she went to the window to gasp for air. She saw Philip still before the eagle's cage—straight, stiff, and every inch a mercantile man. Her lip curled.

'I will go,' she said. Then she saw Beaple Yeo stalk across the terrace. 'No'—she corrected herself hastily—'I will stay.'

CHAPTER XLV.

OBER-ALP.

AFTER Philip had looked sufficiently long at the caged eagle, he went in search of the captain, and found him smoking in the veranda of the hotel.

'Lambert,' said he, 'there's a deal of fuss being made about this American lady, but who is she?'

'Comes from Chicago,' answered the captain.

'I know that, but I want to know something more concerning her.'

The captain shrugged his shoulders. 'She's good-looking, deucedly so.'

'That, also, I can see for myself. Have you made no inquiries about her?'

'I? why should I?'

Philip called the head waiter to him.

'Here. Who is this American lady?'

'Oh, from Chicago.'

'Exactly; the visitors'-book says as much. I don't see how she can be rich; she has no lady's-maid.'

'Oh, saire! De American leddies aire ver' ind'pendent.'

There was nothing to be learnt from anyone about Miss Durham. He applied to the squeaky-voiced chaplain with the military moustache.

'She may belong to the Episcopal Church of America,' said the chaplain; 'but I don't know.'

Some of the waiters had seen her elsewhere, at other summer resorts, always well dressed. Philip, after he had spent half an hour in inquiries, discovered that no one knew more about her than himself. He had heard nothing to her disadvantage, but also nothing to her advantage. He might just as well have spared himself the trouble of asking.

At *table d'hôte*, Miss Durham sat at the long table. Salome was disappointed. She thought that she had succeeded in completely patching up the difference. Philip was indifferent. Just as well that she should be elsewhere. She was an occasion of dissension, a comet that threw all the planetary world in his system out of their perihelion. He made no bones about saying as much. Salome looked sadly at him, when Colonel Yeo took his seat beside Miss Durham, and entered into ready converse with her. She could not take her attention off her friend; she was uneasy for her, afraid what advantage the crafty colonel might take of her inexperience. But it was not long before Philip heartily wished that Miss Durham had been in her place in their circle, for conversation flagged without her, or ceased to be general and disintegrated into whisperings between the girls Labarte, and confidences between Janet and Lambert. Salome was silent, and Mrs. Sidebottom engrossed in what she was eating. Philip spoke about politics, and found no listeners; he asked about the excursions to be made from Andermatt, and was referred to the guide-book; he tried a joke, but it fell dead. Finally he became silent as his wife and aunt, with a glum expression on his inflexible face, and found himself, as well as Salome, looking down the long table at Miss Durham. The young lady was evidently enjoying an animated and entertaining conversation with Colonel Yeo, whose face became blotched as he went into fits of laughter. She was telling some droll anecdote, making some satirical remark. Philip

caught the eye of Yeo turned on him, and then the colonel put his napkin to his mouth and exploded. Philip's back became stiff. It offended him to the marrow of his spine, through every articulation of that spinal column, to suppose himself a topic for jest, a butt of satire. He reddened to his temples, and finding that he had seated himself on the skirts of his coat, stood up, divided them, and sat down again, pulled up his collars, and asked how many more courses they were required to eat.

'Oh! we have come to the chicken and salad, and that is always the last,' said Salome.

'I am glad to hear it. I never less enjoyed a meal before—not even——' He remembered the dinner alone at Mergatroyd, with the parlourmaid behind his back observing his mole. He did not finish his sentence; he did not consider it judicious to let his wife know how much he had missed her.

It was not pleasant to be at enmity with a person who by gibe and joke could make him seem ridiculous, even in such eyes as those of Beaple Yeo. It would be advisable to come to an agreement, a truce, if not a permanent peace, with this woman.

Presently Philip rose and walked down the *salle*. Several of those who had dined were gone, some remained shelling almonds, picking out the least uninteresting of the sugar-topped biscuits and make-believe macaroons, that constituted dessert. He stepped up to Miss Durham, and said, with an effort to be amiable and courteous: 'We are meditating a ramble this afternoon, Miss Durham, to some lake not very distant; and I am exponent of the unanimous sentiment of our table, when I say that the excursion will lose its main charm unless you will afford us the pleasure of your society.'

He had been followed by the Labarte girls, and they now put in their voices, and then Mrs. Sidebottom joined; she came to back up the request. It

was not possible for the American girl to refuse. The captain and Janet had not united in the request, but they had attention for none but each other, and Salome had not risen and united in the fugue, for a reason unaccountable to herself—a sudden doubt whether she had acted wisely in pressing the lady to stay after she had resolved to go; and yet—she could give to herself no grounds for this doubt.

A couple of hours later the party left the hotel. It was thought advisable that Janet should be taken to the summit of the pass in a small low carriage; she could walk home easily, down-hill. Into the carriage was harnessed an ungroomed chestnut cob, that had a white or straw-coloured tail, and like coloured patches of hair about the hocks. It had the general appearance of having been frost-bitten in early youth, or fed on stimulants which had interfered with its growth, and deprived it of all after-energy. The creature crawled up the long zigzag that leads from Andermatt to the Ober-Alp, and the driver walked by its head, ill-disposed to encourage it to exertion. The captain paced by the side of the carriage, equally undesirous that the step should be quickened, for he had no wish to overheat himself—time was made for man, not man for time—and he had an agreeable companion with whom he conversed.

Mrs. Sidebottom engaged the Labarte girls, who—inconsiderate creatures—wanted to walk beside their aunt Janet, and take part in the conversation with the captain. Mrs. Sidebottom particularly wished that her son should be left undisturbed. As an Oriental potentate is attended by a slave waving a fan of feathers to drive away from his august presence the tormenting flies, so did the mother act on this occasion for her son—she fanned away the obtrusive Labarte girls. When she found that they were within earshot of the carriage, 'Now,' said she, 'I am sure this is a short cut across the sward. You are young, and I am

no longer quite a girl. Let us see whether you, by taking the steep cross-cut, or I, by walking at a good pace along the road, will reach that crucifix first.' By this ruse she got the three girls well ahead of the conveyance; but Claudine found a patch of blue gentianella, and wanted to dig the bunch up. 'No, no,' advised Mrs. Sidebottom, 'not in going out—on your return homewards; then you will not have the roots to carry so far, and the flowers will be less faded.' There was reason in this advice, and Claudine followed it.

Presently Amélie, the second, exclaimed, 'But we are just in advance of Aunt Janet. Let us stay for her.'

'Yes, we will,' agreed Félicité, the third; 'Claudine can go on with madame.'

'We will all stay,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Now Amélie, I have seen your sketches, and you have your book with you. Is not that a superb view up the gorge, to the right? I do not know the name of the mountain at the head. What a picture it would make! And finished off with the spirit you throw into a drawing! See, there is a *châlet*, and some goats for foreground!'

'*C'est vrai!* I will draw it.' So Amélie sat on a rock, and got out her materials; and the sisters sat by her, talking and advising what was to be left in and what left out of the sketch. Meanwhile the conveyance containing Janet crawled by. The picture was still incomplete, and the little party was thrown a long way in the rear by this detention.

To anyone observing the zigzag road up the Ober-Alp Pass from a distance, the party would not have been supposed to possess homogeneity. At starting it was led by three—Philip, Salome, and the American lady; but after the first stage of the ascent Salome fell back, then, little by little, the other two quickened their pace till they had completely distanced the rest.

At a lower stage of the inclined road, ascending at an even pace, was Salome, alone. At about an equal distance below, on another stage of the zigzag, was the carriage with Janet and the captain, and the driver, of whom no account was taken; and sometimes ahead of the carriage, sometimes behind, making rushes, then halts, like a covey of doves followed by a hawk, was the little cluster of girls with Mrs. Sidebottom. From a distance at one moment the three girls seemed to be flying before the elder lady armed with a parasol, which she swung about her head, then they seemed to cower on the ground into the herbage as birds beneath a swooping falcon.

The reason why Salome was alone must be given. Before starting on the excursion, Philip said to his wife, 'Let me have a minute alone with that person. I'll make some sort of apology, and set all to rights.'

Accordingly Salome had dropped back where the road made its first twist. But this does not explain why she remained alone for more than the minute. That this may be understood, it will be necessary to follow the conversation that passed between Philip and 'that person.'

'My wife has found a pink,' said Philip; 'she is fond of flowers.' Then, as Miss Durham said nothing, he added, 'I afforded you some amusement at dinner.'

'Amusement?'

'Apparently. It is not pleasant to be an object of criticism. If you desired to punish me for my indiscretion, you must be satisfied. You made me very uncomfortable.'

'Amusement! Oh! do you mean when Colonel Yeo laughed and look at you? I saw you turn red.'

'Enough to make a man turn red, when aimed at by the bow and arrow of female lips and tongue.'

'You are quite mistaken,' said Miss Durham, laughing. 'I was not shooting any poisoned arrow. Do you desire to know what I said?'

'Interest me it must, as I was the object of the arrow, even if tipped with honey.'

'Very well, you shall know. I had seen you looking at the eagle in his cage. And I said to Colonel Yeo that the eagle reminded me of you.'

Philip winced. He remembered his own estimate of that wretched bird.

'And pray,' said he, 'why am I like the eagle?'

'Because both are in situations for which neither was designed by nature. Do you suppose the eagle looks the draggled, disconsolate bird he does now, when on wing soaring over the glaciers? Were his wings made that they might droop and drop their crushed feathers? That stern eye, that it should stare at iron bars, at inquisitive faces peering between them? Now, come, be open; make me your confessor. Have you never had yearnings for something nobler, freer, than to be behind the bars of a counting-house, and condemned to the perpetual routine of business, like the mill of a squirrel's cage?'

Philip considered. Yes, he had wished for a less monotonous life. He had often desired to be able to hunt and shoot, and move in cultivated society, tour in Europe, and have leisure to extend his thoughts to others matters than the details of a lawyer's office, or a manufacturer's set of books.

'Your time is all barred,' continued Miss Durham, 'and the music of your life must be in common time. No elasticity, no initiative, all is barred and measured. Tell me something about yourself.'

'I!' This was a daring question to address to one so reserved as Philip. 'I have had nothing occur in my life that could interest you.'

'Because it has been spent in a cage. I know it has. I can see the gaol-look in your face, in your back, in the way you wear your hair, in your coat, in your every action, and look, and tone of voice.'

'This is not complimentary.'

'It is true. But you were not made to be a gaol-bird. No one is; only some get caught early and are put behind bars, and see the world, and know it, only through bars; the wind blows in on them only between bars, and the sun is cut and chopped up to them by bars and cross-bars, and all they know of the herbs and flowers are the scraps of chickweed and plantain, drooping and dying, that are suspended to their cage bars for them to peck at. I know exactly what they come to look like who have been encaged all their lives; they get bald on the poll and stiff in their movements, and set in their back, and dull of eye, and narrow of mind.'

'You — have you not been a cage-bird?' asked Philip with some animation.

'Oh no, not I. I have kept outside the bars. I have been too fond of my liberty to venture behind them.'

'What do you mean by bars?' asked Philip, with some gravity in his tone.

'Bars? There are bars of all sorts—social, religious, conventional—but there! I shock you; you have lived so long behind them, that you think the bars form the circumference of the world, and that existence is impossible, or improper outside of them.'

'Beyond some none are at liberty to step. They are essential.'

'I am not talking of the natural, but of the artificial restraints which cramp life. Have you any Bohemian blood in you?'

'Bohemian!'

'Wild blood. I have. I confess it. A drop, a little drop, of fiery African blood. You in England have your class distinctions, but they are nothing beside our American separations between white and black. With you a blot on the escutcheon by a *mésalliance* is nothing; with us it is ineradicable. There is a bar sinister cast over my shield and shutting

me out from the esteem of and association with those whose blood is pure. Pure! It may be muddied with the mixture of villainous blood enough—of swindlers and renegades from justice, but that counts nothing. One little drop, an eighth part of a drop, damns me. I do not care. I thank that spot of taint. It has liberated me from conventional bonds, and I can live as I like, and see the sun eye to eye without intervening bars.'

Philip had winced when she spoke about the co-existence of pure blood with that of swindlers and renegades. He stopped and looked back.

They had been walking fast, though up-hill. When talkers are excited and interested in what they say they naturally quicken their pace. They had far outstripped Salome; as Philip looked back he could not see her, for the ground fell away steeply and concealed the several folds of the road.

'What?' asked Miss Durham mockingly, 'looking for one of your bars?'

Philip turned and walked on with her. They had reached the summit, and the ground before them was level. On this track of level mossy moor lay the lake of deep crystal water, in which floated masses of snow or ice, that had slidden from the mountain on the opposite side. Hardly a tree grew here, on this neck, exposed to furious currents of wind.

'May I take your arm?' asked Miss Durham. 'I am heated and tired with this long climb.'

Philip offered her the support she demanded.

'I suppose,' she said, 'that you have not associated much with any but those who are cage-birds?'

He shook his head and coloured slightly.

'Do you know what I am?' she asked abruptly, and turned and looked at him, loosing her hand from his arm.

'I have heard that you are a lady with a large independent fortune.'

'It is not true. I earn my living. I am a singer.'

She saw the surprise in his face, which he struggled to conceal.

'*It is* so; and I am here in this clear air that my voice may regain its tone. I sing—on the stage.'

She put her hand through his arm again.

'Yes, chained, imprisoned eagle, I am a free singing-bird. What do you say to that?'

What could he say? He was astonished, excited, bewildered. He felt the intoxication which falls on an evangelical preacher when he mounts the platform to preach in a music-hall. He was frightened and pleased; his decorum shaken to its foundation, and cracking on all sides.

'What do you say to that?' she asked, and looked full in his eyes, and her splendid orbs shot light and fire into his heart and sent the flames leaping through his veins. He heaved a long breath.

'Yes,' she said, 'you suffocate behind bars.'

Then she burst into a merry peal of laughter, and Philip involuntarily laughed also, but not heartily.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ARTEMISIA.

'THERE is the restaurant,' said Miss Durham, 'and being painted within and without, impossible for us to enter. What say you to walking on to the head of the lake? I want to look over the *col*, and see the mountains of the Rhine valley above Dissentis.'

Philip hesitated, and again looked back.

'I see,' said Miss Durham; 'you are afraid of stepping out of your cage.'

'Not at all,' answered Philip, flushing. 'I am prepared to go to the end of this trough in the mountains

with you, but I greatly doubt seeing much from the further end.'

'Well—if we see nothing, we can talk. Have you looked about you much since we began the ascent?'

'The time has flown,' said Philip, looking at his watch. 'It seems to me but a few minutes since.'

The long dreary valley or basin in which lay the lake was apparently closed at the end by a hill surmounted by a cross or flagstaff. The road ran along the north side of the lake, without a tree to shade it. The party behind, when they came to the restaurant, could not fail to see them if they continued along the road, and might follow, or await them there.

Philip walked on, but no longer gave Artemisia Durham his arm. He saw far away in the rear Mrs. Sidebottom signalling with her parasol; but whether to him, or to the Labarte girls who were dispersed in the morass at the end of the lake, picking butterwort, soldanella, and primula, he could not tell.

His eyes were on the ground. He was thinking of his companion, what a strange life hers must be, incomprehensible to him. He felt how, if he were thrown into it, he would not know how to strike out and hold his chin above water. At the same time his heart beat fast with a wild vain desire for a freer life than that of commerce.

The restraints to which he had been subjected had compressed and shaped him, as the Chinese lady's shoe compresses and shapes her foot—but the pressure had been painful; it had marked him, but the marks were ever sensitive. The ancient robe of the Carmelite fathers was of white wool barred with black, and they pretended that they derived this habit from the mantle of Elijah, which he had dropped as he was being carried up to heaven, and the mantle had touched as it fell the spokes of the chariot of fire in which he ascended, and was scorched in stripes. Philip, and many another successful man of business

who has been exalted to a position of comfort and warmth, has the inner garment of his soul scarred by the wheels of the chariot in which he has mounted. *Philip* felt his own awkwardness, his want of ease in other society than that narrow circle in which he had turned, his inability to move with that freedom and confidence which characterizes those born and reared in generous society. Even with this girl—this Bohemian—he was as one walking and talking with chains to his feet and a gag to his tongue. She was right; he was born to be at ease everywhere, to be able everywhere to walk upright, and to look around him; he had been put in a cramping position, tied hand and foot, and his head set in such a vice as photographers employ to give what they consider support and steadiness, and he was distorted, stiffened, contracted. Had his life been happy? He had never accounted it so—it had been formal at the solicitor's desk, and it was formal in the factory. Was man made and launched into life to be a piece of clockwork? He had thought, acted, lived an automaton life, and taken his pleasure in measuring glasses, never in full and free draughts.

'Have you had a happy existence?' he asked thoughtfully.'

'Oh yes, the birds are happy; all nature is happy so long as it is free. It is in the cage that the bird mopes, and in the pot that the plant sickens.'

Had Philip looked in her face he would have seen a strange expression of triumph pass over it. She had carried her first point and gained his interest.

'Here,' she said, 'is a large rock above the water; let us sit on it, and I will tell you about myself. You had no confidence in me, and would not give me your story. I will return good for evil, and show you my past. I agree with you, there will be no view of the mountains above Dissentis from the *col.* It is not worth our while going on. Besides, I am tired.'

She took a seat on a broad boulder that had fallen from the mountains, and hung fast, wedged on one side, disengaged on the other, over the crystal water that, stirred by the light wind, lapped its supports. Looking into the clear flood beneath, they could see the char darting about, enjoying the sun that penetrated the water and made it to them an element of diffused light.

Artemisia pointed to them, and said:

'Who would not rather be one of these than a gold-fish in a glass bottle?'

Philip at once recalled the pond at Mergatroyd, with the hot water spurted into it from the engine, in which the goldfish teemed, and the globes in every cottage-window supplied with the unfortunate captives from this pond, swimming round and round all day, all night, every year, seeing nothing novel, without an interest, a zest in life. Such had his career been; he, a fish—not a gold one, nor even a silver one till recently, but quite a common brown fish—in a common glass receiver full of stale water, renewed periodically, but always flat.

He looked at the darting char with interest.

'We are in the land of freedom,' said Miss Durham. 'Then don't stand on the rock like a semaphore. Sit down beside me, and let your feet dangle over the water. Oh! as Polixenes says, "to be boy eternal!"'

'"With such a day to-morrow as to-day,"' added Philip, completing the quotation, as he seated himself on the rock.

How wonderfully brilliant the sun was at that height! So utterly unlike the rusty ball that gave light at Mergatroyd, and there gave it charily. How intense the blue of the sky!—dark as the deep-belled gentian, not the washed-out cobalt of an English heaven. And the air was fresh; it made the heart dance, and the pulses throb faster, with a trip and a

fandango such as the blood never attains in our gray and sober land.

At a few hundred yards' distance was a road-mender leisurely performing his task, repairing a track made by a stone that had leaped from the cliffs above, torn up the road, and then plunged into the lake. Far behind could be seen Mrs. Sidebottom flourishing her parasol and gathering the rest of the disconnected party together before the restaurant.

It was clear that she had decided they were not to go further, but to rest at one of the tables in the open air beside the lake, till it pleased the two of the advanced party to return.

Had they been seen? Philip asked himself. Where he and Artemisia now sat, they were screened from observation from the tavern, though not from the road-mender, who was ahead on the way.

'I am not quite sure,' said Philip, and he fidgeted with his fingers as he said it, 'I think I ought to be going back to the party—to my aunt.'

'To your wife, you mean. Why not say so? No; you shall not go. There are plenty with her, five in all, and I—I have only you.'

A flutter and then a scalding rush of blood through Philip's veins.

'This is the land of freedom,' said Artemisia; 'as you came over the Lake of Lucerne you saw Rütli, the sacred spot where the three confederates swore to shake off the chains that bound them and to be free, and its freedom is the glory of Switzerland now. Let this be Rütli. Break those conventional bonds that have tied you, and as a pledge remain seated and listen to me. Remember what I have told you—I want to give you a peep into my past life, and have your advice.'

Philip made no more objection, but he plucked little scraps of sedum that grew on the stone and threw them into the water. Presently fish came to

snap at them, and turned away in disgust, leaving them, when they saw they were not flies nor worms.

'My mother,' said Miss Durham, 'was a German—that is how I can speak the language with as much ease as English. She was married to my father shortly after her arrival in America, and she never acquired the English tongue perfectly; she always spoke it with an accent and intonation that was foreign. But, though she did not acquire perfectly the language of the country of her adoption, she assimilated its prejudices pretty easily, and held them with that intensity which characterizes, in my experience, acquired prejudices, especially when unreasonable. My father had in him a couple of drops of dark blood, and although my mother thought nothing of that when she took him, she speedily came to regard it as an indelible stain. She threw it in his teeth, she fretted over it, and when I was born did not regard me with the love a child has a right to exact from its mother. The continual quarrels and growing antipathy between my parents led at length to their separation. My father left, and I believe is dead; I never saw him after they parted. He may have married again. I do not know; but I believe he is dead. He made no inquiries after me and my mother, to whom I was a burden and a reproach; she looked about for, and secured another, a more suitable partner, a German, working in a factory. They had children, fair-haired, moon-faced, thick-set—and I was alone amidst them, the drudge or enemy of all. I had a good voice, and I was made nurse to the youngest children, and to still them I was accustomed to sing to them. The eldest boy had a clear good voice also, and him I liked best of all my half-brothers and sisters. It was a great amusement to us to follow brass bands, or Italians with organs and monkeys; and when we saw how that these obtained money, my brother Thomas and

I agreed together that we would try our luck. One day—it was the day of the Declaration of Independence, when everyone was out and all enjoying themselves—Tom and I went into the most-frequented avenue of our town, and began to sing. Carriages with ladies and gentlemen passed, and troops of people in their best clothes, all in good humour, and all seeking amusement. We began to sing "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten," Tom taking a second. Some Germans at once gathered about us, and threw coppers into Tom's cap. Presently a man came up with a red beard and a violin. He stood for a long time listening, and then instead of giving us money he asked where we lived, and what our parents were. I told him, and next day he came to see my mother. He was a musician, and he offered to buy me of her, that he might teach me to sing and accompany him.'

Philip's face grew gray, and the lines in it became more marked. He no longer threw bits of sedum at the fish. He clutched the rock with both hands.

'And—what did your mother say?' he asked.

'She sold me—for seventy-five dollars.'

Philip shuddered. He turned and looked in Artemisia's face—to see, perhaps, if her story had left its traces there.

'She wanted a hundred dollars, he offered fifty. They came to terms for seventy-five.'

Philip said nothing. He looked down into the bottle-green depths of the lake, and for some moments Artemisia was silent also.

Presently—with a strange, forced voice—Philip asked:

'How old were you when this transaction took place?'

'Still a child. I travelled about with the red-bearded man, and he taught me to sing, trained me well, and at concerts made me sing, and I got great

applause. I liked that. I was happier with him than at my mother's; I had no babies to carry about, and to hush; none of the house drudging to do. Besides, he was kind, and he was an honourable man after his fashion. He treated me as if I were his daughter, and took immense pains to form me to be a public singer. But always the burden of his song was, "See what you cost me, what trouble you give me! Afterwards, when you are a finished artist, you must be engaged to me for a set of years and repay me for my pains." I had not a word against that. I was quite aware that I was indebted to him, and I intended to show my gratitude by doing as he required. So I grew up, going about with him, and he never allowed me to be treated with impertinence by any man; he always protected me, though not always in the most heroic manner. Once, in California, we were performing, he with his fiddle and I singing, at a liquor-bar, when a half tipsy gold-digger became offensively attentive to me. My master made me leave the place with him, and he ran away with me to San Francisco. I asked him why? He said that he must do that, or shoot or be shot by that fellow, and he had no wish for either. I remember sulking; I would have liked to see them fight about me.'

'How long did you remain with this man?'

'Till I was eighteen, and then, just as I was fit for something better, and to earn more money, my master spoiled his own game.'

'How so?'

'He wanted to marry me. I reckon he thought he could secure me best that way. If he had not asked me, and himself pestered me about this, I would have stayed with him and let him have a share—a lion's share, of my earnings; but he would not leave me in peace—he spoiled his own game by that, and set me free. I left him.'

'And then?'

'Oh! I have been independent since then. I have sung in America, but I have met with most success in Germany. I go about where I will. I have no master.' I earn enough to enable me out of the opera season to go to the mountains or the seaside. This is a dull spot, and I would not have made so long a stay in it had it not been that I was ordered to the elevated air here, because I had suffered from a relaxed or overstrained organ. Now you know my story. What do you think of it?'

Philip was watching her face, and feeling as if he received a shot in his heart every time she turned her splendid full eyes on him, and his hands trembled as they held the stone. 'Ever since I left my red-bearded master I have been alone—alone in the world; I have had no one to whom to cling, no mind to which to go for advice in times of doubt and distress. Alone—do you know what it is to be alone?'

'Yes,' said Philip; he let sink his head on his breast, and looked down into the water. He also had spent a lonely youth, but in what opposite circumstances!

'You can have no idea,' she continued, 'how I have longed, with agony of heart, for someone—someone whose judgment I could trust, whose mind was superior, whose experience had been made in just those departments of life to which I am strange. I have longed for such an one, whom I could regard as a very dear friend, and to whom I could go in trouble and perplexity. But I have no one! For all these years I have been as much alone as the man in the moon.'

Philip put his hand to his collar. He tried to straighten the points which had become limp—his hand shook so that he could do nothing with them; he was being burnt up, consumed, by her eyes which were on him as she spoke of her desire to find a friend.

'Is it not strange,' she said, 'that I who have been preaching freedom should feel the need of a bar—not

of many, but just one to hold by. Do you know what it is to stand at the verge of a precipice? To stand on a spire top where there is sheer abyss on every side? Can you imagine the giddiness, the despair that comes over one? My place is one surrounded by precipices, dangers, everywhere; I see hands thrust out to give me the push to send me over, but not one—no, not one—to hold me.'

'You have mine,' said Philip, and laid his on her wrist. She took his hand and pressed it thankfully.

'Now,' she continued, 'you can understand what it must be to one on a dizzy peak, or apex of a building, if there be a something—a bar even, to which to hold. Then the abysses below can be gazed into with impunity. Holding to that support, the dangers are no longer dreadful, there is no more fear of falling out of sheer desperation.'

She let go Philip's hand, and stood up.

'It is time to return to our party. Oh, what a relief it has been to me to pour out my heart to you! And now, in return, tell me about Colonel Yeo.'

The sound of that name at once brought Philip to his senses. He rose to his feet and stepped into the road.

'I am sorry to be unable to tell you about him, because I know little about him. As I said before, we belong to different spheres.'

They walked back together, talking of the weather and the mountains and flowers, and found the rest at a table. The restaurant was under repair, and no refreshments could be obtained there.

'Well?' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'you have kept us waiting a long time.'

'We have been waiting for you,' said Miss Durham. 'We thought you would come on to the head of the pass.'

Philip caught Salome's eye and avoided it. She looked wistfully, wonderingly at him. What did he

mean by at one minute treating the American lady with coldness and rudeness, and then reversing his behaviour towards her absolutely and at once?

She took her husband's arm as they walked back to Andermatt. Philip was silent. He thought about the story he had heard, of the loneliness of the poor girl who had confided her history to him.

'What a long way this is, dear!' said Philip. 'It seems an age since we began the descent.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

EDELWEISS.

PHILIP could not sleep during the night that followed the expedition to the Ober-Alp. His mind was occupied with what he had heard. He thought of the poor girl, sold by her mother; of her rude apprenticeship, of the risks she had undergone; beautiful, young, attractive. He tossed in his bed. What would become of her? Could she stand exposed to the dangers that beset her and not, as she half-threatened, throw herself over? What could be done for her?

She had spoken of the freedom of her life as giving zest to existence, but too great freedom may pall; it had palled on the girl, and she had put up her hands, pleading to be fitted with light but strong manacles. What a contrast was to be found between his life and hers! He had been cramped and hedged about with restrictions: she had enjoyed an excess of liberty. Virtue, says Aristotle, is to be found in a happy medium, and not virtue only, but the plenitude and manifoldness of life can only unfurl itself in a happy medium between excess of freedom and oppressive restriction. Philip was and ever had been conscious that his .lities had not been allowed due expansion in th .eer into which he had been squeezed; and

this American girl, with doubtless splendid capabilities of mind and heart, had allowed them to run riot and dissipate their fragrance in untutored independence. When she fixed her great dark eyes on him, what a thrill passed through him! and when she took his hand, fire ran up his veins, and broke into a blaze in his heart.

What could he do for her? How was it possible for him to assist her? to be to her the wise friend she desired? If he had made her acquaintance two years ago it would have been another matter, he would have thrown himself at her feet—metaphorically, of course—and asked her to take him as her guide, protector, and friend, to tie up her future with his, and so each would have contributed something to the other to make up what each lacked. Then what a different sort of life his would have been! His present mode of existence was similar, only better in quality, to that he had led before; one had been a sordid drudgery, the present was a gilded drudgery. The difference was in the adjective that qualified, not in the substance of which the stuff of his life was made up. He had now to devote the same attention to figures and technicalities and details as before. The figures, technicalities, details, were formerly relative to conveyancing, they now concerned linen manufacture. Such acquaintances as he had formed at Nottingham had not been intererested in much beyond their business, and the acquaintances he had formed at Mergatroyd had their interests concentrated on their business. Art, literature, science, had been to those he knew at Nottingham, and were to those he knew at Mergatroyd, names, not ideas. Was life worth living in such surroundings, tied to such a routine? It is said that man as he gets older fossilizes, the currents of his blood choke the arteries, veins, vessels of heart and brain, till like furred waterpipes and crusted boilers they can no longer act. But was not the life

to which he was condemned, with its monotony, its constraint, its isolation from the current of intellectual life—a mechanizing of man? Philip knew that he was losing, had lost, much of his individuality, almost all the spontaneity that had been lodged in him by the Creator, and was growing more and more into a machine, like his spinning-jennies and steam looms. He thought of Salome. Had she many ideas outside the round of ordinary life? Was she not an ennobled, sweeter lodging-house keeper? She had been well educated, but her mind did not naturally soar into the ideal world. It went up, spasmodically, like the grasshoppers, a little way, and was down on its feet again directly. She was interested in her baby, anxious to have her house neat, the cobwebs all away, the linen in perfect order, all the towels marked and numbered, the servants in thorough activity, the quotients for the cake and pudding measured in scales, not guessed. She was devoted to her flowers also—he recollected the hyacinths, and certainly they had filled his room with fragrance and anticipations of spring. But he had sent her to sleep by reading aloud Addison's 'Spectator,' and when he tried Shakespeare he found that she had no insight into the characters, and accepted the beauties rather than seized on them.

What, Philip asked with a tremor—what if he had never met Salome, and had met Artemisia? Then indeed he would have been transported on strong wings out of the world of common-place, and the sound of common talk, and the murky atmosphere of vulgar interests, into a region where he would have shaken off his half-acquired habits of formality, his shyness, his cumbrousness and angularity, and become light-hearted, easy, and independent.

In dreams we sometimes imagine ourselves to be flying; we rise from the ground and labour indefatigably with our arms as wings; and Philip was

now dreaming, though not asleep, fancying that he could part with some of his gravity and by an effort maintain himself in another sphere. He had missed his way in life; he was never designed to become a piece of clockwork, but to enjoy life, seize it with both hands, and hold it fast, and drink the mingled cup to the dregs, crowned with roses. Hitherto he had not suspected that the blood in his arteries was an effervescing wine; he had supposed it very still.

What was to be done for Artemisia? It would be inhuman, not to be reconciled with conscience, to turn away, to cast her off, when she entreated him to be her friend and help her with counsel. But how could he assist her? A drowning, despairing girl cried out for help. Could he suffer her to sink? Had he not promised her his assistance?

'I am positively determined,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, next day, 'that we shall go to-morrow to the hospice. I want to see it, and the dogs, and the scenery. So I have ordered carriages; and what is more, we will stay there a day or two; then, such as like, can descend the Val Tremola, and such as like can climb the Pizzo Centrale.'

'I have no objection,' answered Salome. 'We must not leave Andermatt until we have been over the pass and seen the beauties or terrors of the further side. What do you say, Philip?'

'I shall be glad.'

He stood up from table.

'Where are you going, Philip?'

'To Miss Durham, to invite her to join us.'

'Of course,' said Mrs. Sidebottom. 'Let me see, we are eight. Oh! it won't matter, one of the girls can sit outside. The drivers always walk going up hill, so that there will be five in one carriage, and five in the other. And Miss Durham will pay her share. Besides, if there is any climbing and excursioning to be done, she will pay half of a guide.'

But—strange caprice in Salome, she put her hand on Philip's arm, and said, in a low tone:

'No! Philip; no!'

Philip looked at her with surprise. Why should she not wish the American lady to join the party? She was her friend. She had been so desirous that he and Miss Durham should conclude peace, and now that peace was agreed upon, Salome said, 'No! Philip; no!' when he proposed to invite the Chicago girl to join them. How capricious! How unreasonable Salome was! She forms a wish, he hastens to accord it, and lo! she hangs back and is dissatisfied.

His aunt's favourite expression, 'Fiddlestick-ends!' rose to his lips. He was not the man to be turned about by the wayward, unreasoned fancies of his wife.

'Why not?' he asked.

But Salome gave him no answer. She had formed no motive in her heart for asking him not to invite Miss Durham; she had not considered a reason. She reddened to the roots of her hair, but neither gave a reason nor repeated her request.

There lingered all that day a little something, a dissonance of mood between Philip and Salome; neither could account for it, and neither attempted to account for it. He was silent; he wandered about the hotel and the grounds with a hope to light on Miss Durham. He did not go into the *salle* or on the terrace, into the reading-room, or about the garden searching for her. He did not ask the waiters where she was, but he looked about wherever he went, expecting to see her, and when he found her not in the reading-room or *salle*, on the terrace or in the garden, he felt that the place was uninteresting, and he must perforce go elsewhere.

Salome was gentle as usual, spending much time with her baby, showing it to those guests who were so gracious as to notice it, and smiling with pleasure when it was admired; but she was not herself, not as

happy as she had been. Hitherto the only jar to her content was her husband's prejudice against Artemisia; now the jar arose—she did not explain to herself how it arose, but she wished that Philip had not gone so far in his change of sentiment. Yet with her natural modesty and shrinking from casting blame, she reproached herself for grudging to her friend that friendship which she had herself invited Philip to bestow.

The next day was lovely, with a cloudless sky, and the carriages departed. Some grumbling ensued and had to be resisted, on the part of the drivers, because five persons were crammed into one carriage. Mrs. Sidebottom pointed out that the driver would walk. That was true, was the reply, but not till Hospenthal was reached; moreover the horses could not draw more than four up the St. Gothard road to the hospice. There was still snow over a considerable tract; however, at length the difference was overcome by the promise of a small extra payment—two and a half francs extra—which threw such energy into the horses, and so increased their power of traction, that they consented for that price to draw five instead of four persons up the ascent from Hospenthal to the hospice. In one carriage, that in front, sat Mrs. Sidebottom, Janet and the captain, and one of the girls, the youngest. In the other carriage were Salome and Miss Durham, Philip, and the two other Labarte girls.

But Philip did not remain long in it; at the steep ascent above the little picturesque cluster of houses, church, and castle that constitute Hospenthal, he got out and walked. The banks were overgrown with the Alpine rhododendron, as flames bursting out of the low olive-green bushes, and Philip hastened to pick bunches for the ladies. By a singular chance the best flowers and those best arranged went to Miss Durham.

'See dere?' said the driver, taking off his hat. 'Vot ish dat? Dat is edelweiss. You shee?'

He held his dirty brown cap to Philip and showed him a tuft of white flowers as though made out of wool. Philip had never seen the like before.

'Are these found here, in these mountains?'

'Jawohl! round here. Up high! Shee!' The man pointed with his whip to the rocky heights. 'She grow up very high, dat vlower you give to your loaf!'

'Loaf?'

'Jawohl!' The man winked, put his hand to his heart. 'To your loaf—shatz! You undershtand.'

Philip flushed dark. He was hot with walking.

'Let me have some of that flower. You shall have it back. No, thank you, not your hat.'

The man pulled the blossoms out from the dirty ribbon that retained them. 'Dey is dry. But you should shee when dey fresh.'

Philip took the little flowers to the side of the carriage.

'Look at these,' he said. 'The man calls them—no, I cannot say the name.'

'Edelweiss,' said Salome; 'I have seen it dried in the shop windows. It is rare.'

'Edelweiss means the noble white flower,' said Miss Durham. 'It grows far from human habitation, and is much sought after. I have never found it myself, and never had any fresh picked given to me.'

'Would you like some?' asked Philip.

'Very much indeed,' answered Artemisia.

'If it be possible to get any, you shall have it,' he said. Then he walked on.

The fore carriage was stopped, and Mrs. Sidebottom was descending with Claudine Labarte, whom she had persuaded to get out with her and pick flowers, thus leaving the captain and Janet by themselves.

'Before long,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'we shall be

beyond the line where flowers grow, so we must make the best of our opportunity now, Miss Labarte.'

Then Mrs. Sidebottom fell back to where Philip was and took his arm, and pressed it, looked up at him humorously and said, 'I have a bit of news to tell you. He is going to propose. That is why I have got Felicité out of the carriage.'

'Who? Lambert?'

'Lambert, of course. Not the driver. And to Janet. Have you not seen it coming?'

'But perhaps she will not have him.'

'Fiddlestick-ends! Of course she will. Don't you see that she likes him, and has been drawing him on? Besides, I have sounded her. The only difficulty is about Salome.'

'How can she be a difficulty?'

'Oh, she may think it too soon for them to get married when Mrs. Cusworth died so recently.'

'Then they can postpone the marriage.'

'Fiddle-faddle! Of course not. Always strike whilst the iron is hot. That is edelweiss in your hand, is it? Oh, conld you manage to find or get a man to find some quite fresh, for Lambert to present to Janet. It is the correct thing in the Alps. The graceful accompaniment of a declaration.'

'I will try to get some,' said Philip.

'Lambert, you see, will be too much engaged with Janet to go far himself; besides, he is not able to take great exertion. Climbing has a deteriorating effect on the trouser-knees, it makes them baggy. You will get him some?'

'I will go searching for edelweiss when we reach the hospice,' said Philip. To himself he muttered, 'But not for Lambert and Janet.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

TRAPPED.

FOR the last hour of the ascent the carriages passed through snow, not continuous, but between walls cut in the avalanches and drifts that had formed in the basins. The air was cold. The ground was so wet through melted snow that Philip and Mrs. Sidebottom and Mdlle. Labarte were obliged to ride. The walls of snow had fallen in here and there, so that the horses were obliged to flounder through. The scenery was bleak and wintry. The ladies shivered. At length the lake was reached in which the Reuss has its source, and a little beyond it the roofs of the hospice and the inn were visible. In ten minutes the shivering party was assembled in the *salle-à-manger*, which was heated, and was ordering dinner.

The monks had been banished for many years, and the hospice let by the Canton of Tessin to an innkeeper of Airolo, who with his worthy wife and family have been in no way inferior in hospitality, in care for the poor travellers, and in providing for the comforts of the rich than were the brothers of old.

Signora Lombardi, stout, hale, and smiling, was in the hospice, exerting all her energies to get food ready for the large party that had come in. Wines—the best of North Italy, were to be had, and veal in various forms—but always veal, call it what you will.

'Oh! my goodness, gracious me!' cried Mrs. Sidebottom, 'there is a dog—a Mount St. Bernard dog! Oh! the size! the beauty! It must become the rage. Why—I have heard of more than two hundred pounds being given for a tulip, and what would not be given for such a dog as this—and with pulmonary complaint too, that develops on the plains.'

'You do not mean to say, aunt, that you are going

to invest in shares in the Beaple Yeo dog-breeding establishment?' said Philip satirically.

'Colonel Yeo are you speaking about?' interrupted Miss Durham eagerly. 'Do tell me—do you think he will establish his claims to the title of Schofield?'

'He can establish his title to that name whenever he pleases,' said Philip, 'and—once more, if you have any regard for our feelings, you will not mention that person again in our hearing. Oh! here—in this glass on the table—are some draggled specimens of the white fluffy flower you call edelweiss. Perhaps our landlady, Signora Lombardi, will tell us if it grew near this inn.'

'Oh, signor,' answered the stout woman, 'it is to be found by the searchers, but I have never discovered it. I am too fat to climb, and, besides, my day for edelweiss is over.' She laughed and shook her sides as though she had made a good joke. 'I leave the edelweiss to the young people.' Her eye rested with a sly twinkle, first on the captain and Janet, about whom there could be no doubt, and then on Philip and—her eye hesitated a moment between Salome and Artemisia, and then rested on the latter. Philip looked uneasily out of the little window at the bleak outer world.

When dinner was finished the afternoon was advanced. Philip went out in front of the inn, on the platform of rock upon which it is built. Some of the ladies talked of taking a stroll to the head of the Val Tremola, but determined not to go far, they would reserve their strength for the ensuing day. He did not volunteer to accompany them. He had another scheme in his head. Outside the inn was a guide lounging about, smoking and calling to such as passed in the road.

Philip signed to him that he desired to speak to him, and the man came to him with alacrity, but shook his head, and pointed to one of the snowpeaks. He

could speak only Italian, and Philip only English. They were obliged to converse in dumb show. Philip showed him the flower of edelweiss he had brought from the glass on the table inside. The man nodded his head. Philip raised his eyebrows in note of query and pointed to the rocks around.

'Si! si!' answered the man, shaking his head like a poised China mandarin.

'All about there? anywhere?' asked Philip, speaking very loud, as though by loudness he could make the man comprehend.

'Oh! if it is anywhere I can find it easily.'

The man shook his head and again pointed to a snow-peak over which a film of cloud was forming, then being blown away, then forming again.

'Do you mean that it is not out there?' asked Philip. 'I knew that as well as you. There are only ice and snow yonder. Bless my soul, what idiots these men are!'

Then he went back into the inn to equip himself with gaiters and strong boots, and to fetch his stick, with a chamois horn for a handle, that he had bought. Whilst he was engaged fastening his leggings, he heard the voices of the young ladies outside the house. They were starting for a walk. Presently he descended from his room and studied the map of the district, suspended in the *salle*, till he thought he had it well impressed on his brain, after which he sallied forth. The guide was no longer outside. The afternoon was verging to a close, and no one would be likely to require his services, he supposed; consequently he had retired to the lower room of the hospice on a level with the road, where the drivers and carriers, the guides and peasants were regaled with sour wine.

Philip was relieved to see that the fellow was no longer there. He might have wanted to come with him and show him the way, and it would have been

irksome to trudge beside a man with whom it was not possible to converse; besides, edelweiss was to be found everywhere, Madame Lombardi had said, if looked for on the rocks. Those guides made difficulties about finding it, so as to induce the uninitiated and easily persuaded to engage them to direct them to spots where it grew. Philip resolved to go by himself. He would not go far; he could not lose his way; there were no yawning chasms down which he might tumble that he could see, and avalanches, he was told, fell in the early spring. He must do some climbing, of course, because the tourists would have picked all the edelweiss within reach on both sides of the road, and he must scramble to places they had not ransacked, but he would not go into any danger; he would keep his eye on the hospice, or at least, the road. Along the road he trudged in his heavy boots till he came to a great weather-beaten crucifix, that marked the beginning of the descent on the Italian side. The cross was painted dull red, but the paint had peeled away in patches, blistered by frost or sun. Philip looked up wonderingly at it. How out of place it seemed there, in that wilderness of bare rock and pure snow! He seemed to be in the midst of a primeval world, which had not yet begun to produce green trees and herbs, the fowl and living beasts—all around was utter silence, the world around was lifeless. The sun was behind the great wall of snowy glacier mountains, and the vapour that was collected like smoke on its head, so that the prospect seemed to be that of a world such as existed when there was light but the sun was uncreate. And, in the centre of this inchoate, unvitalized world, stood the crucifix. The mountains looked down on it, the glaciers frowned on it, as a thing of to-day, as though they said, 'We were before ever you were dreamed of, and we shall be long after mankind has ceased to believe in self-devotion, and has come to laugh at every creed save the idolatry of self.'

Then Philip diverged from the road, and began to climb. There was a valley opening here from the highest peaks, down which a little rill fell; and on the flank of the mountain which faced the south there was comparatively little snow, and Philip saw tracts of moss and herbage. That would be the garden of the edelweiss; there he must search, and he would find the desired flower without serious trouble.

He was surprised to find the distances greater than they appeared. In that highly-rarefied and clear air things far off appeared close, and dimensions as well as distances were deceptive. He found green carpets of dwarf campion, studded with pink flower, dense as moss; and in the bogs soldanella shaking their delicately fringed purple bells—but no edelweiss. Disappointed in his search on the slope which had promised, he crossed the brook and crept along the flank of the opposite mountain; he would turn its shoulder and get to the side well exposed to the sun; that which he had just explored was, he now perceived, shut off from all but vertical rays by the mountain-ridge south of it. He groped and scrambled, turned back, went higher, had long lost sight of the hospice, had not, indeed, remembered to look for it, when suddenly he was enveloped in dense white fog. He could, however, see the sun through it like a copper ball, but only for a minute, and then it sank behind a ridge, at least so he supposed, for it was extinguished gradually. He must now retrace his steps. He dare not advance; he thought he could find his way back. He remembered several landmarks—a rock, on the top of which was some dwarf shrub, like a wig worn by an old fellow he knew at Nottingham, and a furrow which, if he followed it, must lead him to the brook. But he soon found that he had lost all sense of direction; the disappearance of the sun had taken from him the only clue as to the points of the compass.

He was hot. He sat down for a moment and wiped his face; the water was streaming off it. He was not as yet alarmed, only vexed—vexed especially at his having made this expedition in vain. He would have to return without the edelweiss.

'That is old Jarvis's head with the wig thrust back!' he said, as a nodule of rolled rock appeared through the mist. But when he took a second look at it he doubted.

'I wish I had brought a whisky-flask with me,' he muttered; 'I am beginning to feel an ache in my muscles.'

He stumbled on, and now, to his alarm, saw that the darkness was closing in rapidly. He had not considered, when he started, that in the South of Europe there is no twilight, and that night comes after day without hours of grace.

Now it flashed upon him that what the guide had meant when indicating the mountain-top wreathed in vapour was—not that edelweiss grew there, but that the weather was going to change, or the fog to descend. He hurried on, but did not know in which direction he was going. He was on a steep slope of snow that stretched before him apparently interminably, lost itself in vapour and curled over and enveloped him as in an apple-pie bed, a cold sheet of white below, before, above, behind. And, at that moment, he saw on the rock above him, almost within reach, the white, starry, nodding head of an edelweiss; the woolly flower was burdened with the moisture that had condensed on it from the fog, and was hanging over the stone to shake itself free.

With an exclamation of satisfaction Philip sprang up the slope, caught the rock with the hook of his stick, and tore the edelweiss away.

Had the crook of his stick been what it professed to be—a chamois' horn, he would have been safe, it would have sustained his weight; but as it was only

bone, and the curve came across the grain, it snapped, and Philip shot down the snowy declivity. He still grasped the tuft of edelweiss; he thrust his stick into the snow to arrest his descent; he tore up the snow, twisted the stick in his hand, and shot further down—shot instantaneously out of the fog into dusk, in which everything was distinct, and below he saw a great sweep of snow like a sheet. He looked into it as Sancho Panza into that in which he was being tossed. He drove his heels into the snow, his elbows, his stick, to retard his descent, and suddenly dropped. Then found himself on rubble, still sliding, and brought up with a jerk by a rock. For a few minutes Philip was unconscious. He was aware of a shock, a slide, darkness and noise, that was all. But—where was he? He had vanished from the face of the earth, gone through the surface of snow into a depth beneath. A field of snow had filled the bottom of a valley, and the river ran beneath in a ravine. Nothing could be seen of the cleft, nothing of the river, the smooth sheet of snow hid both; but the force of Philip's descent had broken through that portion of the covering where it was thinnest, near the rock and rubble; he had gone through, and was buried alive. Beneath him, about him, was darkness—pitch darkness; only above could he see the hole through which he had fallen, looking like a silver-gray disc. The air about him was filled with thunder, the pulsating thunder such as he had heard at the fall of the Reuss at the Devil's Bridge, such as he had heard that very day where the river plunged over a wall of rock in the gorge above Hospenthal. The air moreover was as full of water here beneath as it had been above in the fog, but the particles here were much larger. This was the spray cast up by the raging, leaping, headlong water in the abyss.

How far down was it to that torrent? Eye could not penetrate, ear could not tell. The vault of snow

overhead reverberated with the boom of the water, and cast it back into the gulf as it cast back the upthrown spray. He could see no water, he could see nothing save the gap overhead.

What was he to do? His arms were heavy and numbed with cold. He cautiously lifted one and found that the snow had been driven, even rammed, hard up the sleeve by his descent. He was safe where he lodged, on rock, and he shook out the snow from one sleeve and then the other. In doing this he found the bunch of edelweiss. He did not see it; he felt it up his sleeve; it had been carried there by the snow. He did not throw it away; he left it where it was. What was he to do? His situation was precarious. He might turn giddy and fall over. That terrible fascination there is in an abyss might lay hold of him and draw him down. Artemisia had spoken of that fascination, the fascination of despair. Now he felt it.

He tried to scramble up, but the shale slipped away beneath his feet, and he was fain, in an agony of terror, to recover his former place on firm rock. It was not practicable to ascend. He leaned back against the stones, that dripped and ran with water, the melting of the snow overhead, the condensation of the foam from the river beneath. The water condensed also on his forehead and ran off his brows—water cold as ice. Where his fingers worked hollows in the loose soil, the water settled, and soaked his fingers and turned them dead with cold.

Was it that there was rhythm in the fall of the water, or was it that his pulses beat in his ear and gave rhythm to the continuous thunder? He could not tell. He heard the throb of sound, or it seemed to him to be the rattle of the machinery of his mill at Mergatroyd multiplied to infinity.

His feet had glowed with the exercise, but now they began gradually to lose heat, and turn stone-

cold. In time, they would cease to have feeling in them, then in numbness and weariness his knees would buckle under him, and he would shoot headlong, like a diver into the black void. How far down was it to the water—to death—he wondered. Would he feel—be conscious of the shock over the edge before he went into the water, or crash with his head against a rock? He had heard a fellow clerk say that as he was drowning the whole of his past life rushed before his eyes and spread itself out as a panorama, a succession of scenes, in a moment of time, twenty years unfolded leisurely in one second, displaying every incident, not crowded but in sequence, and all articulate. Would it be so as he went over the edge, in the span of time between the rocks on which he stood and the clash and extinction below? His heart grew faint; and he felt in him the qualm that a bad sailor knows as the vessel plunges into a deep sea-trough.

But—surely he would be sought by the people at the inn. Certainly he would be sought, but in what direction would they look for him? How trace him in the mist? How suppose he was below the surface of the smooth quilt of snow in the Val Tremola, sunk out of sight, hanging over a boiling torrent? And now down past Philip ran a thread of silver; it startled him, and he looked up the line to see a glimpse of the moon appear above the hole through which he had fallen. The fog must have cleared away, or be clinging partially to certain mountain-tops. If the moon were clear, then the search for him could be prosecuted with some chance of success. But Philip was not over-confident. His powers of endurance were ebbing. He raised his feet and stamped on the rock; he could feel the shock in his joints, but not in his feet—they were dead. His hands were stiff. He put his fingers into his mouth, but this only momentarily restored vitality. After the feeling

had gone the muscular power would become paralyzed. He was not hungry, but squeamish. He looked again at the moon, and continued watching it eagerly; it slid forward and shone full through the window of his dungeon. The light fell on rocky point and rill of leaping water, but could not illumine the abyss below, out of which rose the voices and thunderings—the voices of death, the thunderings preceding judgment.

And now the white ray of the moon smote down into the gulf below his feet and disclosed a shoot of the purest, most sparkling silver, the leaping torrent as it danced over a ledge into utter darkness, into which no moon-ray could dive.

Suddenly from above a mass of snow detached itself and fell past him, a mass so big that had it smitten him it would have carried him down with it.

The side of the hole in the snow-dome grazed the moon and ate more and still more out of it. Philip looked with fear—he felt that when the whole of the moon had passed beyond that opening, and not another ray fell into it, when again the darkness of that vault would become utter, hope would die away from his heart, and he must fall.

But as he stood looking up, watching the slipping away of the moon, he saw sharp cut against it a black something, and heard, above the roar of the water, the discordant sounds of a bark. He was found—found by one of the hospice dogs.

The first giddiness of renewed hope almost overcame him. He trembled as in a fit, and his knees bent so that only by a supreme effort of the will could he brace them again. He believed he heard shouts, but was uncertain.

What followed remained ever after confused in his memory. He heard some Italian words in his ear, saw or felt someone by him, was grasped, a rope fastened round him, he heard himself encouraged to make an effort, tried to scramble, helped by the rope,

broke through the snow, was in the upper world again, was surrounded, had brandy poured down his throat.

Then he was seized by the hand and shaken.

'*Old fellow!* Phil! 'Pon my word, you have given us a turn. We have been hunting you everywhere.'

'Lambert!'

'Yes, Phil, and who'd have thought to find you trapped under the snow?'

The men of the party urged immediate movement to restore circulation. Philip's hand, when dropped by Lambert, was seized again and held tightly, but he had lost feeling in it. Nor could he see clearly; he was dazzled by the light—the brilliance of the moon and the glare of the snow—after the darkness below.

'Who is that laughing?' he asked suddenly.

'Oh—Miss Durham,' answered Lambert.

'And—who is that crying?'

A whisper in his ear—'It is I—Salome.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

PHILIP passed a night of pain and fever. He was bruised and shaken. His hands had been scarified in the slide down the rubble, and when circulation returned in them they bled. The exposure to cold had affected him, and he ached in every joint; his skin was as though red-hot plates had been passed over it. He could not sleep, for if he dropped out of consciousness it was into mental fear that he was falling down a precipice into the vortex of an unseen torrent, and he woke with a start that sent a thrill of torture through his strained nerves. He could not get the roar of the water out of his ears; he had carried it away with him in his head. Salome, at his

request, to dispel it played the jingling piano in the *salle* underneath his room, but that was powerless to dissipate it. Then he sent his request to Miss Durham to sing. Perhaps her splendid voice might drive away the delusion. Her answer was that she had no voice. No voice! He knew that she had; she had boasted to him of it. He sent another message. Then came back the reply that she could not, and would not, sing to such a detestable little instrument as that in the *salle*.

Next day Philip was obliged to keep his bed. He was in discomfort and pain, and not the best of tempers.

'Salome,' said he, when his wife came to him with her fresh bright face full of sympathy and cheering, 'thank you for going on playing on the piano yesterday evening. Whilst you played I could forget the roar, but it returned directly that your fingers left the keys. I take it most unkind of Miss Durham that she would not sing.'

'Oh, Philip! don't you know that she has come to the high mountains to husband her voice, and it is possible that to sing at this great altitude—we are nearly seven thousand feet above the sea—might do it serious injury.'

'Why did she laugh when I was drawn out of the chasm?'

'Philip, dear, I cannot tell; but neither she nor I had any idea of the danger you had been in. The ravine was completely blocked up and sheeted over with snow, and we did not know anything of the horrible chasm down which the river plunged and through which it struggled. We only knew that you had gone through a crust of snow, and that you had to be drawn out.'

'But did you not hear the thunder of the torrent?'

'We did not particularly notice it—the roof of snow muffled it. You who were beneath heard it, but we—

we may have heard something, but had no more idea of what there was beneath than you can have had when you slipped through.'

'It was very unfeeling of her to laugh.'

'Look here, Philip,' said Salome. 'In turning the sleeves of your coat inside out I have found these flowers—edelweiss, and fresh.'

'Yes, I found them.'

He considered for a moment, and then said: 'They are for you. Wear them, and let our party know that I did not encounter the risks I passed through without bringing back with me a prize.'

'Thank you, dear Philip;' she stooped over him and kissed his lips. 'Dear, dear Philip, I shall never part with them. It was most kind of you, and brave, too, to go in search of them for me.'

'Salome,' said he, 'don't let Lambert, and above all Mrs. Sidebottom, come and worry me to-day. I am in horrible pain, I cannot move, and I cannot bear to be bothered. You go down and take a little stroll; do not mind about me. I will try to doze. I had no sleep last night. I am turning all the colours of the rainbow, I was so bruised. I shall be right in a day or two. No bones are broken, but I cannot stir, and cannot endure to be worried; let me be quiet and a good deal to myself. I will sleep when I can.'

'May I sit by you a little?' she asked timidly. 'I will not speak—only hold your hand.'

She took his silence for consent. And he found comfort in her presence; a soothing feeling crept up his arm from her hands that clasped his, and spread over his heart.

He was somewhat ashamed of himself. He had not made his expedition among the rocks, and met with his fall in searching for edelweiss for her, but for Artemisia. Salome had accepted the flower, and cherished it as if he had sought it for her, and he

allowed her to remain in this delusion. Was this honourable? Was it in accordance with that strict rectitude on which he plumed himself? Yet he could not tell her the truth; it would wound her too deeply, and—humble himself too considerably.

Two days ago Artemisia Durham had taken his hand on the Ober-Alp, beside the lake, when he extended it to her in pledge that he would do great things for her; and now, in redemption of his pledge, he had tried to get her a bit of edelweiss, and had tumbled through the snow in his efforts. And what could he do for her? She had not asked for legal advice or for figured table-linen, the two things he could furnish her with without offence. It was as well that his hand was hurt—it served him right; he had no right to offer what he was unable to perform. How differently he had felt as Artemisia held his hand! Then an intoxicating current had set boiling through his veins, turning his head, maddening him. Now the cool hand of Salome conveyed balm to his aching joints, and what was a better medicine, though a bitter one, self-reproach to his conscience.

Now, also, for the first time since his walk with Miss Durham, some of his old suspicion oozed up through the joints of his thoughts. What was the reason of her laughter? Thrice it had occurred; first she had said something laughingly about him to Beaple Yeo at table, and provoked that odious creature to an explosion of laughter. Then, on the Ober-Alp Pass she had laughed for no particular reason that Philip could see, and had made Philip laugh with her. And, lastly, she had laughed mockingly, alone, when he was rescued from the very verge of a dreadful death.

He shut his eyes and lay still. Salome sat by him for an hour, and then, thinking he was asleep, released his hand, kissed him quietly, and stole from the room. Mrs. Sidebottom wanted to take a short walk; it was

tedious in the inn, with only a few old and odd volumes of Tauchnitz novels about; and cold or inactivity was rendering the Labarte girls torpid, and they were clinging about Aunt Janet, or dropping upon her, at embarrassing times. Mrs. Sidebottom did not feel equal to managing all three unaided, and as Miss Durham declined to accompany her, she insisted on Salome lending her aid. Salome consented. Her husband had wished that she should go out, and he was asleep and could be left without anxiety. The girls had been shown at Andermatt beads and seals made of a sparkling stone, which was said to be found on the St. Gothard road, half-way down the Val Tremola, and when Mrs. Sidebottom proposed a walk they entreated to be allowed to search for this precious stone, of which they resolved to compose necklaces for themselves, or at least bracelets. It would create quite a sensation at Elbœuf; not one of the girls there had seen this beautiful stone—not one probably had heard the name of Tremoline, by which it was called.

There was another reason why Mrs. Sidebottom, on this occasion, particularly desired the companionship of Salome. She was commissioned to break to her the news that Janet and Lambert were engaged, and to use her endeavours to overcome any prejudice Salome might entertain against the marriage being solemnized shortly, at Berne, at the Embassy. And Mrs. Sidebottom was about to attack her on this point by representing that she, Salome, was not the person to make objections when she herself had married Philip within a very short time of the supposed death of Uncle Jeremiah, who, though he was not her father, had stood to her much in the light of a parent.

Salome had observed that Janet and the captain took much delight in each other's society, but she had not given their association a serious thought;

she knew that her sister liked lively society, and the captain had exhibited, whilst at Andermatt, an amount of vivacity and humour which she had not given him the credit of possessing. They were both interested in things of which she knew nothing, and naturally, therefore, sought each other's society. They were also connections in a roundabout fashion. Through Philip, Lambert became her cousin, and as Janet was her sister, he must be some sort of cousin to Janet. Quite near enough relation to remove starchness of intercourse, and place them on easy terms of cousinly association, that excused a good deal which would be inadmissible were they unrelated.

Philip heard the voices of the party outside the house, the crisp laughter of the girls, and the sawing tones of Mrs. Sidebottom, and then the sounds became distant, and ceased. His meditations were interrupted about a quarter of an hour later by three raps against the wall by his head. The several rooms in the inn were small, and divided from each other and from the passage by wood — not very thick deal boarding, papered over, but which in places had warped and split the paper. Signora Lombardi, every spring, with a pot of paste and some strips of paper, went about the rooms pasting over the rifts, disguising them, and preventing the partitions from being as diaphanous as they were diaphonous. German, Swiss and Italian beds are wooden boxes, narrow and short; and in such a bed against such a wall lay Philip, unable to move without torture.

Again three loud raps.

'Who is that?' he called.

'You are awake, Mr. Pennycomequick?' asked the voice of Miss Durham, almost in his ear. 'We are in adjoining stalls. I want a word with you, because I leave this insufferable place to-morrow, I can endure the cold and tedium no longer; and before you return

to the nether world, I may be away unless you descend in a *glissade*, and shoot through the roof of the Hôtel Impérial upon us into the midst of the table at dinner.'

Philip felt the partition between them shake. She was laughing. She had her chair against it, and leaned against it—to speak to him and to laugh at him.

'I must ask your pardon,' she said presently with a twitter in her tones from suppressed merriment; 'I did not realize your danger, or rather the danger you had escaped, when pulled out of the snow. But my laughter was excusable; you can have no conception how infinitely comic an object you presented; and the whole affair was so ridiculous. You—going aloft after edelweiss without the smallest acquaintance with its habitat, and with no experience to teach you how to keep your footing in Alpine altitudes, and shooting down, pop! through a hole into the nether world. And then—to see the men about the hole extracting you—it was like Esquimaux fishing.'

Philip was not only vastly offended, but he was also greatly shocked, at the conduct of the young Chicago lady, holding a conversation with him through the wall when he was in bed. To show his sense of the indelicacy of her course, he said nothing in return.

She tapped again.

'Well, Mr. Pennycomequick! have I scandalized you? We are in the land of freedom; and I am a daughter of the Stars and Stripes, and we American girls are not so particular about trifles as are your English misses. Are you very much bruised and crumpled?'

'Very,' groaned Philip.

'Do you good; take some of the starch out of you. You had the temerity to browbeat and insult me, when first you came to Andermatt. Now I have

served you out, and I may tell you this to your consolation, that it is a lucky thing for you that you had your fall and contusions. But for that I would have turned you inside out, and twisted your silly head off your shoulders. I intended to do it, for no man offends me and escapes stings. I am content to leave you as you are, black and blue, and disjointed, like a wretch on the rack.'

She was stretching his mind on the rack and disjointing that as well, sitting, leaning against the wall, and working the mechanism.

'Mr. Pennycomequick, I heard about you from your wife before you arrived; how different you proved to the idea I had formed, you have too much conceit to imagine. I found a wooden man, with his limbs affixed to his trunk by pegs, with a wooden face, wooden ideas, wooden manners—and when this wooden figure-head had the audacity to insult me——'

Philip exclaimed, 'What I said was true. You yourself admitted its truth, when you told me your story.'

'My dear dolt!' said Miss Durham, 'I admit it. But who likes to have the truth skewered on a bayonet, and rammed down his throat? And now—what I say would splutter about like Japanese fireworks and do no one any harm, were it not that it is true, true in every word, and this it is that turns each word into duck-shot, with which I pepper you—through the wall.'

It was a wonder that next day Signora Lombardi did not find the sheets of No. 18 singed, so hot did Philip become between them with offended modesty, with anger, anguish, and shame.

'The game is up, so I do not mind showing you my hand,' cried Artemisia. She had folded her arms over her breast, and leaned back, with her head against the wall, and talked hastily, passionately,

'That little wife of yours, who is a thousand times too good for you, and whom I pity, yoked to such a fellow as yourself, she told me that it was not possible for you to come to love me, *because* she was your wife. Not, she hastened to explain, that she esteemed herself irresistible, and very superior, but because she had such a towering opinion of your rectitude, equal to your own of yourself. That was as much as daring me to attempt the conquest; and your own absurd self-esteem was another provocation. When you threw down the glove I accepted the challenge, and you know how in an hour or two I had spun you round like a teetotum.'

She stayed talking to laugh. As she laughed she shook the wall, and the wall rattled Philip's bed, and the rattling bed rattled his aching joints; but he felt these pains no more in the intensity of the agony of shame that he endured in his racked mind.

'You were quite fetching!' she continued. 'When you held out your hand and offered to be my stay, I was obliged to jump up. With all my powers of self-control I could hardly keep from boxing your ears and sending you into the lake for your impudence. However, I had no wish that the transformation scene should come off too soon. I intended to lead you on through other follies till I had ruined your reputation and your self-respect. But the fates have been against me; I cannot wait longer here. I abandon you to yourself and to your good little wife. I cannot waste time over you. I have other matters to attend to; better game to pursue than such a wooden leaping frog as you.' She stood up from her chair, and went to the window; it commanded a bleak prospect. She could not see the returning party on it. The girls Labarte had perhaps found the desired minerals and would not desist from collecting till they had each enough to form a *parure* of Tremoline.

Artemisia returned to her seat against the wall, and said, 'As for that romance I told you about myself, believe of it as much or as little as you please. When you tell your own story, with your autobiography, the little episode of Artemisia Durham will not be found in it. We only remember and write of ourselves as we would like others to know us, not as we are. Is it not so?'

Then suddenly she broke into a song, a popular Viennese opera air, which she had turned into rough English verse to enable her to sing it at concerts elsewhere than in Germany. She had a beautiful, a naturally flexible voice, and every note was like an articulate crystal drop.

'A little grain of falsehood
Is found in all that's said,
It penetrates as leaven
Whatever's utterèd.
No man is what he seemeth,
No woman what appears.
There's falsehood oft in laughter,
And falsehood e'en in tears.
Both fact and fib together go
In everything we say or do.
To a peck of truth—a pinch of lie,
As the spice in the pudding, to qualify.'

CHAPTER L.

IN THE HOSPICE.

THERE is a toy, the delight of children, that consists in a manikin with his legs curled under him, weighted with lead in his globular nether parts. This manikin, however, persistently held down, or violently knocked over, always rights himself.

And there are human beings similarly constituted. With them self-conceit supplies the place of lead. There is no disturbing their equilibrium for more than a moment. Lay their heads in the dust, and the

instant the finger that depressed them is removed, up go the heads again, nose in air. Strike them with horsewhip or poker, and they shiver in mute anger, unconscious of humiliation, and they are steady again, nose in air. Bore holes in them, and you cannot let out their ponderosity and disturb their equilibrium; set them on the fire, and you cannot melt the self-conceit out of them. It oozes out of their pores, it distils from their finger-tips, it streams out of their eyes, it pours from their lips, and yet never exhausts itself, any more than the oil in the cruse of the widow of Sarepta. Kick them, and they travel upright, nose in air, along the carpet; pitch them out of the window, and they go down head uppermost; sink them in the deepest well, and they sit, slowly disintegrating at the bottom, head up.

Philip was not one of these. It was true that in him was a large amount of self-esteem—or what religious people would call self-righteousness, but it was not an organic inbred quality; it had been developed by his education, by the circumstances of his early life, and could therefore be expelled from his system by sharp medicine. By one of those exquisitely pitiful provisions of Nature, which compensates to the nightingale for his plainness by giving him a tuneful voice, and to the peacock for his harsh notes by surrounding him with a glory of gold and green, men of little acquirements, little minds, little presence, are furnished with the blessed gift of bumptiousness, which makes them unconscious of their insignificance, which induces those who can by no probability be heroes to others to be heroes to themselves. Just as the most ignorant men are the most positive, so are the most empty men the most self-contained. They can blow themselves out with the breath of their own nostrils.

Success in life is not necessary to make a man conceited, nor beauty to superinduce vanity in a woman.

The extravagances of conceit are found in those men who have made a botch of life, and of vanity in those women who have least personal charms. Every disappointment, every rebuff, throws them in on themselves, and they seek in themselves that approval and appreciation which is denied them without. Like Narcissus, but lacking his excuse, they fall in love with themselves, because no one else will love them. Is it not possible that appreciation may be an element as necessary to the psychical as oxygen is necessary to the physical life, that when it is not freely given or wrested from the world without, we may set to work to engender it for ourselves within, just as in Jules Verne's romance those who voyaged ten thousand leagues under the sea, being out of the element that naturally fed the lungs, manufactured it for themselves under water?

Had Philip been constitutionally conceited, had bumptiousness been congenital, like scrofula in the blood, or tubercle in the brain, the overthrow he had met with at the hands of Miss Durham would not have seriously affected him, would have had no educative effect on him. He would have sighed and resigned himself to the conviction that Miss Durham was to be pitied, not he, because an inscrutable Providence, which denies to some eyes the faculty of seeing colour, and to some ears the power to distinguish and enjoy melodies, and to some noses the capacity to delight in odours, had denied to Miss Durham the ability to admire and adore him.

In the classic tale, Achilles was plunged by his mother Thetis in the waters of Styx, which made him invulnerable, save in the heel by which she held him. So our good mother, Nature, takes some of her children, not the robust of brain and the Achillean in vigour and beauty, and renders them callous, so that they can pass through life unhurt by shaft of ridicule, scourge of rebuke, and flout of fortune. Every arrow

glances off their skin, every blade used on them has its edge turned, every cudgel breaks without bruising. What happiness is theirs! They are whole and unhurt, whereas their richer endowed brothers are hacked, and pierced, and heart-broken.

The author had once to do with a worthy, pious man, put in a situation under him, who was triple-panoplied in the hide of self-esteem. As is usual with such persons, he was not much short of a fool, and did very foolish, inconsiderate things. When called to task for some egregious act, he bore the reprimand with meekness, then retired to his closet, where he prayed for him who had rebuked him, as for a persecutor. Never for one particle of a moment did it occur to him that he himself deserved blame. And the author knows full well that the callous-skinned who read these pages will feel no cut from his words, but draw up their heels under them, out of the way of his scythe.

It has been proved by experiment that the tortoise can live though deprived of its brains, but the tortoise is the animal with the hardest epidermis known. Perhaps the converse may be true, that those animals with the largest proportion of brain may have the most sensitive skins.

Now Philip was no fool. He had plenty of sound sense, but his moral faculties had been warped by the circumstances of his early career, and he had grown up with great suspicion of others, but sure confidence in himself. Now, suddenly, his eyes had been opened by a rude shock; his moral nature had been subjected to a *glissade* and a jolt almost as severe as that which his body had undergone, and as he was not tough and horny-hided in mind, he felt the results as acutely. If he ached with bruises and sprains in flesh and sinew, so did he ache with bruise and sprain in all the tissues and fibres of his inner spiritual self.

When Salome returned to Philip's room she found

him disinclined to talk; he was still twitching and quivering from the lashes he had received, conscious only of his present pain, covered with humiliation. He had not been given time to think of his future conduct, even to consider the retrospect; the present torture occupied and made to tingle every nerve of his soul.

With the innate tact which Salome possessed, she saw at once that he did not wish to be disturbed; though she could not divine that he had other cause for suffering than his fall, or that other injuries had been done him than those which made his body black and blue. She knew that he was in pain, and that he sought to disguise the fact from her, and though full of solicitude for him, she did not harass him with attentions.

She drew a little stool beside his bed, and seated herself on it, with needlework for the baby, and did not look at him.

He lay on his back, but turned his head, and saw her beautiful auburn hair, with the evening sun tinging it with orange fire. For some time he looked at it without thought of her, only of himself, his shame, his jarred self-respect. That jest of Artemisia about the Esquimaux watching about a hole in the ice, to pull out of it a fish, was present to him; he saw the fish come up flapping its tail and tossing to escape the barb; and then thought of himself being hauled out of the hole in the snow through which he had plunged. Then he considered how that she—this malicious woman—had held him with a hook in his jaws and had played with him, and then how he had been suddenly plunged out of a world of light and smoothness into an abyss where all was darkness and horror. Where was he? Into what had he fallen? Had he not almost shot over the precipice, and gone down into the uttermost depths of degradation? What if this accident had not befallen him? What if that

woman had gone on playing with him, and had lured him further, as in the folk-tales the nixies of the waterfalls lure shepherds to throw themselves over, with the vain belief that by so doing they will fall into the arms and be received into the realm of the water sprites?

His ideas became confused. At one moment he was a fish caught by a barb, then he was clinging to a rock, withdrawing from the enticements of a siren. The sun had set, or no longer crowned Salome with fire, she continued her needlework till dusk closed in rapidly and prevented her seeing her stitches. But she sat on, upon her little stool, resting her cheek against the bedclothes. Philip, half dreaming, had caught a lock of her hair and twisted it round his finger, and held it as if it were something that was so firm, so sure that if he clung to it, if he would retain it about his finger as a golden hoop, he could not continue his slide and fall, and so thinking, or fancying, in a confused condition of mind, bred of, or fostered by pain and shame, he had fallen asleep. Salome sat on, did not venture to move her head lest she should disturb his sleep by withdrawing her hair from his fingers.

Next morning Mrs. Sidebottom, Miss Durham, Mrs. Baynes, and the Labarte girls, together with the captain, departed for Andermatt, leaving Salome with her husband in the hospice. They did not leave without an altercation and a controversy between Mrs. Sidebottom and the hostess relative to the bill, in which both engaged with unmatched weapons, as Mrs. Sidebottom could speak no Italian, and Signora Lombardi no English. The former could not be brought to admit that the hostess was justified in charging somewhat higher for provisions, six thousand eight hundred feet above the sea, than in the valleys where wine is produced and calves are reared. Mrs. Sidebottom effected no greater reduction than a franc

and a half, which she insisted on having expunged, as a charge for a meal she protested she had not eaten. She then attempted to shift a couple of bottles of sparkling Asti from her account to that of Miss Durham, and to transfer sundry eggs for breakfast to the bill of Mrs. Baynes, who she was sure had ordered them, though she admitted having eaten them on the urgency of Janet. Eggs six thousand eight hundred feet above the sea are—well, eggs. Fowls at that elevation are sluggish layers, and eggs if brought up from the valleys run risks of being broken on the road. Mrs. Sidebottom, who resisted paying a penny a-piece for them when charged to her, saw that there was reason for setting that value on them when they were in Mrs. Baynes's account. She fought desperately over the fish. There were lakes hard-by the hospice doors, and fish in lakes, easily procurable, therefore it was unreasonable that they should be charged fancy prices.

Mrs. Sidebottom achieved a great success in negotiating a bargain with a driver from Andermatt, whereby she and the captain were taken back by a returned carriage that had discharged its load at the hospice; she succeeded in securing the conveyance for half the ordinary price. Though she engaged the carriage for herself and her son, the captain did not return in it, but the three demoiselles Labarte. Janet and the captain, who had become inseparable, and who reacted on each other, he reviving her health, and she evoking life and wit out of his torpid nature, returned in a smaller trap behind the carriage of Mrs. Sidebottom. Miss Durham had made her own arrangements, and went off in a cabriolet by herself. She took an almost affectionate farewell of Salome, whom she really liked, though she despised her. Miss Durham was sure she had done Salome a good turn in the way in which she had brought Philip to his senses, and she accordingly patronized and petted his simple

wife. She was pleased with herself for having contributed to the happiness of the young wife by making a fool of her husband, and then telling him what a fool he had been made.

Salome in her guilelessness reproached herself for having for a little while felt a suspicion of her husband and her friend, for having given way to a feeling of jealousy, for having been unhappy because Philip was so good and obliging as to make an effort to do what she had herself urged him to—make friends with the lonely American girl.

And Philip? In him self-reproach grew. It could grow now, for the soil was ready for it. Hitherto it was choked with the roots of pride and self-esteem. These had been torn up, and he was able now to appreciate himself justly and realize the preciousness of Salome.

Formerly he had looked upon himself as having done a grand and gracious act in taking her to him. An injustice had been committed—how he did not know—in some mysterious way, and he had stooped in the integrity of his soul to take up Salome, make her his wife, so as to indemnify her for her loss.

The suspicion he had entertained against his aunt relative to the will before the return of his uncle had been deepened since he had talked the matter over with Jeremiah. He had now very little doubt that Mrs. Sidebottom had succeeded in getting at the document unguardedly kept by Salome, and tearing away the signature. But though he was tolerably convinced that this fraudulent act had been committed by her, he had not till now considered that by this act his family was dishonoured, as was hers by the existence of Schofield. In what were the Pennycomequicks so much more virtuous than the Schofields? Earle Schofield, her father, was a swindler, and Louisa Sidebottom had committed an act that was felony.

And what was he, himself? He had wounded, driven from him with reproach and harshness the most innocent, single-hearted of women, who was faithful to him and to her duties in every fibre of mind, and body, and soul; whereas he, in a few hours, subjected to a slight temptation, had swerved from the path of right, had yielded to the fascination of the temptress, which he had not the moral strength to resist, and had been carried by her almost to the verge of committing a serious wrong.

The unworthiness of Schofield could be cancelled by the unworthiness of Mrs. Sidebottom. There was not much choice between them. But what was there to set in the account to balance his deviation in heart from his duty to Salome, the injustice and cruelty with which he had treated her at Mergatroyd?

Philip saw all this now clearly, and felt keen mortification and repentance. Salome was constantly with him; and he now, from his bed, and when he rose and walked leaning on her, had his eyes opened to see her many merits, to love the perfect purity and integrity of her soul. She was a child in heart, with the mind of a woman. She was not very clever, but she had common-sense. She was well but not highly educated, she had seen very little of the world, and this had necessarily given a narrow sweep to her powers; but her faculties were good, and with a widened range, her mind would rise to take an interest in all that was presented to her view. Hitherto he had liked Salome, appreciated her chiefly because she was a comfort to himself; now he loved her for her own sake.

Moreover, that little flare-up of jealousy in Salome's heart, a flare-up for which she accused herself before God on her knees—had transformed her regard for Philip into real love. The calm, lukewarm affection, sprung out of a sense of duty, had been changed by this spasm into ardent, passionate love.

That was a cold and colourless world—aloft on the summit of the St. Gothard Pass, and yet there the beautiful flowers of mutual love and trust between husband and wife came into blossom.

'Philip,' exclaimed Salome, coming into his room with a letter in her hand, 'is it not kind of dear Janet? Here is another sweet note from her, telling me how darling baby is.'

'My dear, I know what a trial it is to you to be parted from him.'

'Oh, Philip—I am with you.' Then opening the letter and showing it him, 'Only fancy!—my father and Miss Durham have left the Impérial.'

'What—left Andermatt?'

'Yes.'

'Together?'

'I do not know; Janet does not say. And, Philip, she says you are to mind and get quickly well, for positively next week she and Lambert are to be married at the Embassy at Berne.'

CHAPTER LI.

AGAIN HYMEN.

Is there in all Europe a more delightful old-world town than Berne? There are grander minsters, there are more princely mansions, but there is no lovelier situation than that occupied by the dear old city perched on a rock round which the green Aar forms a loop. May the great cancer of modern Berne that lies in the west never creep over and destroy the beauty of the ancient town, as the same horrible fungus growth is disfiguring and killing the charm out of nearly every ancient city on the Continent. Even our common red-brick houses are better than the vulgar ash-gray, Jerusalem-artichoke coloured

edifices, all staringly alike, and equally uninteresting, that are growing up in long line and regular square in imperial Aix, in patrician Nürnberg, in episcopal Spires, everywhere treading on and trampling out beauty. In a hundred years, probably, all the great towns of the Middle Ages will have been transmuted from gold to lead, and be utterly unattractive. When we see a ruin of a church, an abbey, a castle, an old manor-house, even of a straw-thatched cottage, we are sad, for we think what they were, beautiful in their several ways, and all having lost much by becoming ruins. But of these modern edifices everything we can say is that we live in hope that they may become ruins, for then only can they conceivably touch the picturesque. In England, our builders have grasped the truth that there is beauty in a broken skyline, and in alternation of light and shadow in a frontage; but on the Continent, in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, no architect has risen above the idea of drawing parallel lines, and of making of every street an elementary study in perspective.

On a brilliant summer day, when the sun was streaming down out of a perfectly-blue sky into the long main street of Berne, alive with marketers, three carriages drew up at the entrance to the Hotel of the Wild Man, near the Clock-tower, and from them stepped, in the first place, a young man in light-gray trousers and lavender gloves, and then a young and pretty lady wearing a bridal veil, a wedding-dress of silver gray. From the second carriage descended three bridesmaids—no other than the Labarte girls—and from the third Mrs. Sidebottom and Philip and Salome.

Captain Pennycomequick had been married at the Embassy to Janet Baynes, and if the day's weather gave a true presage of the new life entered on, that of the captain and his bride was likely to be a happy

one. But there were surer grounds on which to base a forecast of their hymeneal condition than the state of the weather. The captain was an amiable man, whom nothing would rouse to opposition, and Janet, as he and his mother had ascertained, was very comfortably off. She had or would have about five hundred a year, and five hundred per annum in France, where they intended to live, would allow of their enjoying themselves as much as if they had double that sum in England, not necessarily because things were cheaper in France, but because popular opinion allowed retrenchment in a thousand of those trifles which in England are the great outlets that let money leak away.

There was to be no wedding-tour; not because Janet did not desire to escape with the captain from the rest of the party, but because the Labarte girls absolutely refused to be parted with. They had suddenly woke to the discovery that Mrs. Sidebottom had hoodwinked them, had carried them away out of sight and hearing whilst love-making was in progress; a veil had been torn from before their eyes, and they saw through all her dodges and subterfuges, and were in combined mutiny and angry protest. Henceforth nothing would sever them from their aunt. A great opportunity had been lost through the craft of that designing old woman, a passion on a grand scale had raged, so to speak, under their noses, and they had not sniffed it. Their attention had been drawn away, and they had been unable to make those interesting and instructive studies in the process of love-making to its grand climax in proposal, which might have been theirs and been to them of incalculable interest and advantage, but for that dreadful Sidebottom. Thus—if they could no longer take observations in the conduct of lovers, they could examine, and store up their observations on the conduct of newly-married people in the honeymoon. They clung to their aunt, with their

arms about her neck, they lavished expressions of tenderness, they protested that they could not and would not be separated from her; and Janet foresaw that a wedding-tour encumbered with the Labarte girls would be worse than none at all, or one with the Labarte girls plus Mrs. Sidebottom, and Salome and Philip to draw them off from her occasionally. As the party drove from the Embassy, Mrs. Sidebottom said to Philip:

'By the way, what do you think? *Wonders will* never cease. Did you see the entries in the marriage register previous to those made by Lamb and Janet?'

'I did not look.'

'*I* did; and whilst you were arranging about fees I made inquiries. There was a marriage at the Embassy this morning, before our affair. An unheard-of thing in Berne to have two English weddings the same day, so the chaplain said.'

'I dare say.'

'And guess who they were who entered the holy bonds.'

'I really cannot. I know none likely.'

'But you do know, and are quite able to guess.'

'I have not the energy, then.'

'Why, Colonel Yeo, that is to say, Earl Schofield and our friend at Andermatt, Miss Durham.'

'Nonsense!' Philip was startled.

'It is a fact. I suppose he really is an earl, for he was entered in the register as Earl Schofield, and not as Colonel Beaple Yeo.'

'But,' Philip stammered, 'it is not possible; he cannot.'

'He has. I saw the entries. They were married half an hour before we arrived.'

'I will inquire about it,' said Philip, 'as soon as ever the carriage stops. I will go back to the Embassy. Something must be done. He had no right to marry.'

'Why not?'

Philip did not answer. He was excited and uneasy.

'You cannot go till after the breakfast,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'and I suppose it is too late to forbid the banns. I presume he is really an earl. He says that the attainder is up. He truly is a distinguished-mannered man, and I like him. He looks a nobleman.'

In the evening the entire party visited the Schänzli, a garden or restaurant on a commanding hill above Berne, once occupied by a fort from which it takes its name. From the terrace is seen the range of the Oberland mountains, and, in the middle distance below, is the town viewed in its full length with towers and spires, and gabled roofs of chocolate-brown tile. Visitors are attended on by waitresses in the pretty costume of the canton.

The evening was lovely, a meet conclusion to so bright a day. The setting sun illumined the distant snows of the giants of the Oberland, and quivered in the windows of the city below. There are epoch-making scenes in life, scenes to which the memory recurs with unalloyed pleasure, scenes which have been revelations of beauty or majesty to the soul, and such a scene is that from the Schänzli to the visitor who is there for the first time. It is a double revelation to him—the splendour of the glacier mountain world, and simultaneously with it a realization of the beauty, the charm of that old world of the Middle Ages which is being remorselessly and surely effaced, and on which in another century the men of that generation will be unable to look, or will know of it only a few scattered monuments, set in wastes of hideousness, and judge of it only as one might judge of the ocean by contemplating a few shells dug out of a chalk bed.

The party of Pennycomequick-Sidebottom-Labarte had settled itself to a marble-topped, or, to be more exact, imitation marble-topped table, and had

ordered the waitress to bring the *carte* of wines and meats, when Claudine Labarte nudged her aunt, and whispered:

'See! see! There they are, M. le Comte de Schoville and our dear Artemise. Shall we go to them?'

'On no account,' said Mrs. Penycombe-Quick, that is to say Janet, hastily. 'Besides,' she looked in the same direction, 'they do not seem to desire our interference.'

All looked at the little table, not far distant, where sat Beaple Yeo, alias Schofield, and his bride. The same day that had smiled on Lambert and Janet had laughed over them, but without sure augury of calm weather apparently; for already a post-nuptial storm had broken loose. Beaple Yeo was leaning back in his green-painted iron chair, very red and blotched in face, and opposite him was Artemisia whom he had just made his wife, flushed and talking rapidly.

It was clear that they were in angry altercation—about what could not be learned—for their voices were drowned by the music from the little theatre in the grounds, in which the overture to Boildieu's 'Jean de Paris' was being performed.

Beaple Yeo curled his whisker round his forefinger, and said something in reply to a discharge of angry words from Artemisia; whatever it was that he said, it so stung her that, losing all self-control, she sprang to her feet, leaned across the table, and struck him on the cheek. Beaple lost his equilibrium, and went over with his chair on the gravel of the terrace, to the great amusement of the Swiss waitress, and of the scattered visitors at the tables, who had noticed the altercation. Artemisia was startled at her own violence, and ashamed; she looked round, and caught sight of the friends she had made at Andermatt. Her colour was so heightened with passion that it could not become deeper with shame. Instead of resuming her seat, without regarding the humiliated

man who was picking himself up from the ground, she came directly to the table where the party of Pennycomequick-Sidebottom was seated, and with heaving bosom and flashing eye, she stood before Philip, and said in a tone broken with excitement: 'You have helped to deceive me. It was mean—it was cruel! You insulted me first of all, and then you conspired with this—this man to play me a base trick. It was unworthy of a gentleman, of an Englishman.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Philip; 'I do not understand of what you are speaking. I am quite unaware that I ever deceived you.'

'You told me he was a nobleman—an earl—and he is nothing of the kind.'

'I never said he was.'

'I asked you, and you answered me that he was an earl.'

'I did no such thing. You misunderstood me. You asked me whether he had any right to the title of Earl of Schofield, and I answered—I recall exactly my words—that he was perfectly justified in calling himself Earle Schofield. That is his name. Whether he has any right to call himself Beaple Yeo, and to claim to be a colonel, is another matter on which I entertain grave doubts; but I have none whatever that his surname is Schofield, and that his Christian name is Earle.'

Artemisia did not speak for a minute, she was very angry and ashamed. When she had in some measure recovered her self-possession, she said bitterly: 'You might have been more explicit.'

'I refused to say much about the man. I had my reasons. Moreover, I had no idea that the matter was one of importance to you.'

'I have sold myself to him. I have married him this day, and only now have discovered that I have been basely imposed upon.'

'It is I—I who have been taken in,' shouted Yeo, coming forward, pushing to the table, regardless of the shrinking fear that appeared in the faces of Salome and Janet. 'It is I,' he repeated, 'I that have been deceived. I was led to believe you were a wealthy American, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars—and—and I want to know where is the money? You are an adventuress.'

'And you are an adventurer,' laughed Artemisia. 'Perhaps we have taken each other in, and we are both fools to have been so easily deceived. Who told you I was a rich American heiress?'

'The waiter at the Impérial.'

'And he told me you were a rich milord.'

'I want to know what you *really* are,' said Yeo, who was also very angry—angry and *disappointed*. 'I have a right to know who or what manner of person I have married.'

'And I,' said Artemisia, 'I also want to know who and what manner of person I have married.'

'That, perhaps, I can tell you,' said Philip gravely. 'But not in the presence of these ladies. Mr. Schofield, or whatever you call yourself, I will trouble you to return to your table, or reseat yourself where you were. I see the waitress is in alarm lest she should lose payment for what you ordered and have consumed.'

Beaple Yeo sulkily went back to his place. Philip with a sign, showed Artemisia that he desired her to follow. She obeyed. When they were beyond earshot of Mrs. Sidebottom, Salome, and the rest, Philip said, standing by the little table, 'Mr. Schofield, I also wish to ask of you a question.'

'I am ready, my dear boy, to be put through my catechism,' answered Yeo, with recovered assurance. 'If you want the pedigree of Schofield, I have it at my fingers' ends.'

'It is not the pedigree so much as the alliances of Earle Schofield that interest me,' said Philip.

'Oh, the Schofields have been allied with the best blood in the land, better than your twopenny-ha'penny manufacturers.'

'I must ask you to tell me whether, before you married Miss Durham at the Embassy to-day, you had ascertained that an alliance—not a very high one—was at an end.'

'What do you mean?' asked Yeo, with his face slightly changing colour.

'You may happen to remember Ann Dewis, the coal-barge woman, whom you married at Hull some sixteen years ago?'

Beaple uttered a low oath.

'I have reason to know,' continued Philip, 'that she is alive—and you know that she is so, as well as I do. Miss Durham, this fellow had no right to marry you. His legitimate wife is still alive; no countess, but a vulgar old woman who owns and works a coal-barge on the Keld-dale Canal. He has a son by her. One good turn deserves another, and as you did me a real kindness at the hospice I repay it by freeing you from a degrading union just contracted with this wretched man, who is a mere adventurer and swindler. And now, one word with you, Schofield. The evidence of your bigamy is at hand. Take care that you never show your face at Mergatroyd to annoy me or my wife, or that you trouble Janet—if you do I shall have you immediately arrested on a charge of felony, for what you have done to-day.'

CHAPTER LII.

THE DEVIL'S KNELL.

IN Carisbrooke Castle is a deep well, three hundred feet in depth, and, in order to draw the water, there is contrived a great wooden drum or wheel, which, when turned, draws up the bucket. Within the wheel

stands a donkey, and it turns it by stepping on as if walking, although, in fact, the animal never advances an inch, for, as it moves, the wheel revolves under its feet. One ass was known to perform this task for fifty years, and another for forty years. There is, unless we guard against it, a tendency in ourselves to fall into the same routine—tramping, tramping on, over the same ground, in the same unambitious manner, neither advancing in our course, nor varying our horizon.

The acquaintance with Miss Durham had wrought much good in Salome as well as in Philip. She had opened his eyes to see his ignorance of himself, and hers to her ignorance of the world. Salome's previous existence had been within a narrow sphere. Shut off by peculiar circumstances from forming many acquaintances and having many friends, with her horizon contracted almost within the walls of the dingy and ugly red-brick house occupied by the Pennycomequicks, uncle and nephew, there can be no doubt but that she would in time have settled into a condition little superior to that of the Carisbrooke ass. Her mind would have trotted round and round in the same drum, and have accommodated itself without a murmur or a thought of resistance to it. In the course of years she would have become almost as ordinary, as petty-minded as the deceased Mrs. Cusworth. But contact with Miss Durham had startled her out of this intellectual donkeydom. She saw in the American girl a vivacity of interest, a breadth of view, a sparkle of intelligence, a receptivity for novel ideas, and a knowledge of the world and of the things in the world—the currents that circulated in it, the forces that propelled its waves and directed its tides, to which she had been completely strange. And this stimulated in her the desire to know. An American gentleman once said to the writer, 'We have no prejudices, therefore we are always learning.' That is

the secret of American success in every branch of activity. Self-conceit breeds pig-headedness, which raises mountains of prejudice in our way, preventing us from seeing, as the Germans have it, that there are men beyond these mountains. Salome had noticed that Miss Durham was able at once, and without effort, to arrest the interest and enchain the attention of Philip, and this she attributed to the possession of qualities in the Chicago girl which were dormant, if not non-existent, in herself. She had the shrewdness to perceive, and the good sense to acknowledge, her own ignorance and inability to take part in conversation when it turned on politics, natural history, on music, art, or social questions of the day. She could talk about recipes for tapioca and semolina puddings, what proportion of water should be put with milk for a baby, the delinquencies of servants, the sermons she heard, the hymns she sang in church, the cutting-out and style of a dress, but not on much beyond. Being humble-minded, she was ready to take to heart what she recognised, and she studied Miss Durham with attention, to ascertain the points in which she was accomplished above her own acquirements.

When ale in bottle turns flat, housewives put in a raisin, and this at once restores the effervescence. A prudent spouse should have a reserve of raisins ever by her to pop into her husband's spirits whenever they are down. Some wives, however, act on the reverse principle, and perforate the corks, or knock off the necks of all the sparkling liquors in the cellars of their husbands' hearts. They cannot endure to see their good men cheery, sanguine, interested, hopeful; they reduce them all to the state of lymph and insipidity. Such wives when they find their husbands strung to concert pitch play the domestic accompaniment a semitone lower, so that the daily music of the household is a discord. They take the edge off their husband's wit with a sneer, overshadow his spirits

when they sparkle, lash him to anger when he is pleased, and goad and spur him to madness when they find him jaded and desirous of repose. By a native perversity they seek to be always at cross purposes with their husbands, and then grumble because their victims do not smile and sing on the bed of nettles they have strewn for them.

But Salome was not one who could degenerate into such a mar-peace as this. In her lowly mind she acknowledged her deficiencies, and as she was endowed with energy and with excellent abilities, she determined to remedy these shortcomings in herself, and had the capacity to accomplish what she resolved.

The forethought of Jeremiah Pennycomequick came to her aid opportunely. He also, by his holiday of two years, had been thrown out of his drum, and had found that there was another and a brighter world than that of the tread-mill. He had discovered, late in life, that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and not a dull boy only, but a cantankerous one.

Man is a lantern, and the vivid intellect within is the light; by nature he is a lantern with many sides, through all of which the interior light streams, irradiating and bringing into prominence a thousand surrounding objects. But the pressure of modern life forces him to blacken over one after another of these sides, and to line each with a reflector, so as to focus the light, and cast it through a single lens. The stress of competition, the strain of the social struggle, combine to make of each man a bull's-eye lantern. It is true that the light so concentrated illumines such objects as fall within the radius of the beam with superior brilliancy, but it leaves everything else in more profound darkness. What is gained in intensity is lost in the periphery. Jeremiah had discovered this, and more than this. He had learned by his own weakness to take a more kindly interest in others, to be pitiful towards their infirmities, patient with their mistakes and even follies.

Having himself tottered irresolute on the edge of the commission of an extreme act of folly, from which he had been rescued solely by a providential intervention, he was able to make allowances for lack of judgment or weakness of resolve in others.

Jeremiah saw that Philip had quarrelled with Salome, and, without inquiring into the occasion, he understood sufficient of their several characters to see that the best possible means he could adopt for reconciling the difference was to give them a holiday together abroad—to let them travel on the Continent for some time, and mutually learn much of which both were ignorant. He accordingly wrote to Philip not to return to Mergatroyd till Christmas. He wished, so he said, himself to spend some months at the mill in recovering the threads of the business which had fallen from his fingers, and to settle thoroughly down again into the old groove of life.

This enabled Philip, who was liberally supplied with money, to visit Paris, Rome, Milan, Venice, and return to England by the Rhine. He and Salome made travelling acquaintances, some agreeable, all instructive; they saw France staggering after its humiliation, and Germany ruffling in its pride of victory; they shared small adventures, and equally small jokes such as spring up on all travel, and are as poor to preserve as the flowers gathered. They saw together picture-galleries, heard together operas, and together acquired a fund of experience of life in many aspects unattainable at Mergatroyd. The tour was, as Jeremiah designed, educative to both, and it broadened and deepened their mutual sympathies. It did more: it bound them together as chums in the same school, where both read out of the same books and summed on the same slate, and wrote out the same moral sentences in their copybooks. As they learned together, they assisted each other; what escaped the eye of one was perceived by the other, and each took

delight in drawing the attention of the other to what he or she observed.

They laid up together a fund of pleasant recollections to which to revert when holiday was over and work began; a shifting diorama of scenes and incidents and personages that would transform and beautify the interior of the drum when they were recalled to the obligation of treading it.

But not so only. When they returned to work, it would be to hope and scheme for such another excursion together in the future, though perhaps they could hardly look for another of the same duration. The retrospect would enrich, and the prospect stimulate, and banish tedium and the sense of drudgery from their life and work at smoky Mergatroyd. . . .

What veins of interest had, moreover, been opened to both—flowers, scenery, pictures, music, antiquities, social customs, political institutions, European history past and that making under their eyes, such were no longer dead words but living interests, germs of thought, studies to be pursued at home in the intervals of work, in relaxations from task, by the aid of books and papers, and in common.

As mention has been made of the saying of an American, the writer ventures to quote another—the remark made to him by a Belgian. 'I perceive that when a Flemish shopkeeper has realized a little money over the necessities of life, he says to himself, "Now I will buy a picture!" The German under the same circumstances says, "Now my son shall learn another language!" The American says, "Now I will see the world!" The Englishman says, "Now I will have salmon, though it is four shillings a pound." They fill their minds—your man his stomach.'

There have been found toads embedded in stone, which are supposed to have occupied the same situation for even six thousand years. For six thousand years their minds have never travelled beyond the

cavity in which, enveloped in obscurity, they have squatted; and men will allow themselves to settle down into holes exactly fitting them, in which they will sit out the span of their allotted days in self-complacency, without an idea beyond it, an ambition outside it.

Indeed, we live upon a Goodwin Sand, that is ready to engulf us, to suck us down and embed us in its heart, unless we bestir ourselves and resist the downward suction.

Let the reader look around him and see how many of those he knows are embedded in their holes as toads, able only to talk about their holes, to be touched by nothing which does not affect their holes, are unconcerned about everything save the texture of the stone that encloses them, and the slime that drapes the walls of their hole.

We do not say that the only means of escape from such bondage and mental stultification is Continental travel; there are a hundred ways of escape from petrifaction, if only we will use them, and use them persistently. In the case under consideration it happened to be the way, and the most effective way, in which both Philip and Salome escaped from the holes into which they were about to sink and become sealed up.

But there is one way in which the overplus of money will never help to deliver us from petrifaction, and that is, by putting it into our stomachs in the shape of salmon at four shillings a pound.

We remember the case of a very short-sighted man, who had been short-sighted from infancy. He never wore glasses till he was aged about five-and-twenty, and then suddenly found himself launched into a new world, and able to see and take a lively interest in things which had been hidden from him hitherto. We are all, through life, if we do not voluntarily become like the toad-hole dwellers, being introduced into new worlds, whether by the acquisition of a

picture like the Fleming, or by learning a new language, like the German, or by travel, as the Yankee. Philip and Salome had put on their glasses simultaneously, and it quickened their affection for each other to be engaged on the same effort, and to be together in the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge and experience. Besides this intellectual and moral bond they had another—certainly at the time not very intellectual, but a very fast and dear one—the little Philip, who travelled with them wherever they went, and who wound himself about both their hearts, and in doing so blended both in one. It was early in life for the child to begin his travels, but travelling did not hurt him. He throve on it. Before he said 'Pa,' or 'Ma,' he articulated the syllable 'Go.' As Philip the Greater said, an augury of the young man's future, as one of action.

At length Philip and Salome were home; and once again Salome flew to the arms of the dear white-haired old man, whose face had lost all its hardness and had acquired a new expression of sweetness. And Jeremiah was able to receive her loving embrace, and to hold her to his breast without shrinking, without a tremor. The storm had passed and the St. Luke's summer had set in on his end of life, to be cheered not only by the presence of Salome, but also by that of Philip the Little, who, it was clear, would become the pet and idol of old Jeremiah, even more than he was the pet and idol of his father and mother.

Late at night, in the nursery, at the nursery window on Christmas Eve, when Philip the Great, and Philip the Little, and Salome were returned to Mergatroyd, husband and wife stood, looking out into the star-besprent wintry sky. Salome had her arms round Philip's waist, and he had his thrown over her shoulder, drawing her to his side, and she rested her golden head on his breast. The only light in the room came

from the fire; the only sound for some time was the breathing of the child in its cradle.

Both were happy, and occupied with their own thoughts.

At length Philip broke the silence, and said:

'It is very, very good of Uncle Jeremiah; he has taken me into full partnership, and what is more, he proposes that he should winter abroad and return in spring to allow of our then taking a holiday together.'

'And what is he going to do about Mrs. Side-bottom?'

'I cannot say. He is himself undecided. He says that as he laid the trap into which she fell, he must not be too hard with her. He will see her himself. He goes after the new year to France when he will visit her and make some arrangement. He says, but hardly can mean what he says, that it is a law of nature that persons pinched in circumstances and pressed for money lose their scruples, as crabs cast their claws, and lizards drop their tails when nipped or pursued. It is a law of nature and must be allowed for.'

Philip felt a shudder of protest against his side, but Salome said nothing.

All at once she started. 'Oh, Philip! What is that?'

A sound issued from the cradle. She ran to it, stooped and looked at her baby. The flashes of the firelight were reflected from the ceiling on the little face.

'Hark! oh, hark, Philip! Baby is laughing—laughing aloud in his sleep. He has never done that before. It is from very joy at being home—at his own dear home again.'

'What, Salome?—after Paris and Rome, the Alps, and the Rhine, poor old dirty, dingy Mergatroyd is dear?'

'To be sure it is, Philip—how can it be otherwise?

And oh, Philip, how kind the people are! How pleased they all seem to see us back again. I thought —I really thought they would have shaken my hand off, and that old Fanshawe, the night-watch, would have kissed me, Philip. There may be more light-hearted, more picturesque, more romantic people in other lands, but there can be nowhere, not throughout the world, more true, warm-hearted, sterling folk, than our dear Yorkshire people. Do you not love them, Philip?'

'I have given Yorkshire the best proof of my attachment in taking to me a wife from thence.'

'Oh, Philip!'

Salome nestled to his side again by the window, and with him again looked forth silently into the night sky.

After a long pause Philip said, 'Hark!'

Through the still night air could be heard the church bell.

Three.

Three.

Three.

'Some man is dead,' said Philip. 'How strange!—at midnight.'

Then he counted the strokes that denote the age. He counted to one hundred.

'One hundred!' exclaimed Philip. 'How extraordinary! How can that be?'

'Philip,' said Salome, laughing, 'do you not know? It is the Devil's Knell.'

'The Devil's Knell?'

'Yes, at midnight on Christmas Eve, the sexton here and in other Yorkshire towns tolls the knell. The Devil is dead. Christ is born.'

After a moment's thought, Philip said gravely, 'Yes—the Devil is dead, that is to say, the old evil principle in me—my former self-assurance, pride and mistrust—it is dead. But, Salome, I ought to tell

you that there was a time, and not so long ago when I——'

She put her hand over his mouth.

'The Devil is dead,' she said; 'I want to hear nothing of his last sickness. But, Philip, you ought to know that I was—at Andermatt—very foolish, very jeal——'

He stopped her with a kiss.

'Salome, you were never foolish: you were always an angel.'

'Well,' she said, 'we will not talk of the past: we will set our faces to the future. The Devil is dead.'

THE END

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